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Harry Stillwell Edwards,

Author of "Sons and Fathers," etc.

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THE MARBEAU COUSINS.

By HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FLIGHT.

Early in the summer of 1886, the simple mountain people of Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia, who let the pine and cedar knots blaze upon their hearths after dark and friendly shafts of light pierce the night through the cracks of their cabin walls, made the acquaintance of a man whom, at first, they invariably regarded with suspicion, but in the end as invariably favored with their rude hospitalities, without expectation of reward.

This man was never known to spend more than a few hours at any house and no one ever saw him by daylight, nor the second time. What became of him during the day was not known, but it was easy for those who had defied the revenue officers to guess that the rocks and vine-encumbered ravines furnished him convenient refuge. A few whose business called them abroad after dark saw him shadow-like glide by in the moonlight and disappear in the woods. Once the suspicious moonshiners detained him, and once he fell into the hands of government officers engaged upon a raid. No one harmed him.

Seen by the wavering light of the blazing chunks as he stood in the mountain cabins, he was a man of not more than thirty-two years, erect, lightly but compactly built and of little more than the medium stature. His hands were small and white where the skin shone through the

stains upon them, and his feet were incased in the remains of what had been good gaiters. His worn and torn clothing showed in its texture something superior to the rough jeans and homespuns of the mountains.

All these details were carefully studied out by his hosts, for the lives of many of them called for the utmost caution in dealings with strangers, and revenue spies were not infrequently abroad. But the examinations always ended when the questioning gaze returned to the man's face, which was, while grave and immobile, singularly open and trust-inspiring; the face of a man then under self-control only by powerful efforts and wearing a record that was indefinable if it stood not for mental suffering.

But this face drew much of its trust-inspiring quality from the eyes. Its expression, despite its sadness and misery, was admirable; the eyes large, brown and singularly luminous, the ray in them being an exaggeration of that strange flame, which, if it be not the spirit itself, is born of it, and is oftener seen in the eyes of dogs than men. Whatever its origin, this noticeable, nay entrancing light, seemed to suggest and index a power, an energy, almost a fever within, that, guarded and desperately restrained at every other point, betrayed itself at the eye.

To these conspicuous points was added a voice that was full, round and musical and abounding in those overtones which make some voices so pleasant upon the ear.

He told the same story everywhere; he was one of the people, he needed friends and help for the time being; he had no money nor wanted any—a little food,—that was all. His business? He had none. He was making his way to friends, on foot because he could not afford to ride. Different people drew different inferences; but they gave him of their humble stores. He thanked them gravely, and passed on out of their lives forever; but not always from their memory.

The hill country succeeded the mountains, and still the stranger held a southward course, avoiding the cities and towns and even villages, when possible. He kept close

to the open heart of nature and her simpler children, instinctively. One evening at dusk, footsore and utterly wearied, he came to a swift stream that wended its way to the sea. The path he traversed led to the ferry, and there tied up for the night was the great flat with a bateau attached. Without hesitation he entered the latter, glided under the darker shadow of the trees and disappeared from the scene.

All through the long night the traveler's weary arm sent the little craft southward under the stars, his gaze strained for rocks, in which the stream abounded, and once, caught in the rapids despite his desperate efforts, it swung crosswise, rolled over a submerged obstruction and hurled him into the water. No cry escaped him, no prayer to heaven. Rescue seemed impossible in that lonely river at midnight. Over the rapids they went, and when the foamy level below was reached the man was bruised, exhausted and half drowned. He had clung mechanically to the paddle, the only tangible object in reach of his hand. The overturned boat floated near him. Swimming and wading he pushed it ashore, righted it again and hatless and chilled to the bones renewed his perilous journey. He suffered, but with the dumb uncomplaining stoicism of the Indian. Indeed, he resembled nothing so much in his swift silent passage as one of the vanished braves, a Cherokee or Choctaw stealing through an enemy's country.

And then, as eagerly the lonely boatman searched with straining eyes the shapes and outlines of the hills that bounded the valley, there came upon the clouds overhanging a forward bend of the stream, a strong upward glow. For the first time in that long struggle an exclamation burst from his lips, an expression of satisfaction. Keeping in the middle of the stream, he glided swiftly by a large city, its many lights doubling themselves in the waters that carried him. The rise and fall of his paddle were noiseless; his passing was as the shadow of a cloud or a log drifting endwise to the sea. It was nearly

day again; no one was abroad upon the river; no one hailed him and no sound broke the stillness except the hissing steam of locomotives harnessed for their journeys, and the far away stroke of a town clock. On under the bridges he went, and then the lights died away behind, and the hills ceased to hem him in. The low country with its stretches of cypress and cane, its festoons of gray moss and long trailing banners lifting and falling in the faint breeze, received him. Like a shadow merging into a shadow, he passed out of the visible.

The traveler felt the change. His pace slackened. Then he began to search the shore line closely, returning wearily more than once over his course, until finally a dark narrow opening in the canebrake that walled in the stream caught his eye. He promptly turned his boat into it. Here it was utterly dark, for the stars were out and he made but slow progress, the little bayou winding through the tangled swamp in a most exasperating way. But he proceeded with confidence. Whoever he was he had found familiar scenes, for no human being in those black depths could have advanced without accurate knowledge of the way.

The swamp ended at the base of a low hill where the table lands ran out, and in the clearing on the margin of the bayou stood a cabin, light glimmering under the closed door.

For the first time on his long journey the traveler hesitated before the friendly light of a cabin. This time he sat motionless in the boat and listened intently. What at first seemed the murmur of winds in the trees in the depths behind him, swelled out clearer as the tones of a human voice beyond that door, a wild, weird, wordless monotone of sound, a chant as mystic as ever dervish sang under an eastern moon.

The man in the boat was strangely affected. The paddle dropped from his grasp, and burying his face in his hands he bent silently to an emotion that shook his frame as a vine is shaken by the passing of a wind. But what-

ever the storm that had arisen within, whatever the memories stirred, he at length regained self-control. Thrusting his paddle deep into the water again he sent his boat ashore, stepped stiffly out, made his way to the end of the little building and applied his eye to a crevice. The singing ceased abruptly, and, as he drew back into the darkness, all was silence except that in the swamp a laughing owl awoke the echoes with unearthly cachinnations. Going confidently to the door he drew the latchstring and entered. A woman sat in a low chair before the fireplace, her back to him. She raised her head and listened intently without turning.

CHAPTER II.

LIVE! LIVE TO KILL!

Then was enacted one of those dramas, inexplicable by any known rule, in which subtle intelligence is born and asserts control. The woman suddenly straightened bolt upright in her chair, and, the silence continuing, her aged form arose until its full height of six feet was visible to the man who stood with folded arms behind her. The great, gaunt figure, with its wrinkled yellow neck and wisps of gray hair projecting from her plaid turban, wavered a moment in the changing firelight. Her voice broke the silence, weak and full of quavers, but gathering strength as her evident excitement increased.

"I saw young Marster under de new moon," she said, "lost and ersleep in de hills! I hyard es voice when de moon was full; an' all de dark nights I hyard 'im callin' for Silvy tell I cyant sleep. An' now I hyah es footstep on my cabin flo'." She waited.

The man made no answer. Slowly, with dread, she turned her wrinkled face and fixed upon him her weak, dim orbs. At sight of the hatless figure and the eyes of the man, now blazing in his bearded face, she uttered a low moan, followed by the single word, a mere whisper:

"Dead!"

"Yes, dead," he began. She caught her breath with a gasp and stretched out her hand to the rude mantel, while he continued, "dead to the world; but to you, Mammy Silvy, to you and one man, alive!" He rested his hand lightly upon her shoulder as he spoke. "You are the one friend that Chilon can rely on," he continued bitterly; "but he has one enemy, and life is worth living if we have one friend and one enemy!" Still doubtful and trembling, the woman took his hand in both of hers, and struggled for self-control while she sought to read his face.

"Changed! Changed!" she whispered. He looked away a moment, his head drooping.

"Twelve years of the life I have led is apt to change a man," he said. "I am changed; but the headstrong boy that left you so long ago, who used to play upon your cabin floor and sleep the noon hour on your white bed—well, the boy is a man conscious of his strength. Chilon is dead; but he who lives in his place is the friend of his friend, and to him who slew Chilon"—he seeemed to choke a moment and then with unrestrained passion the words broke forth, "he is the deadliest enemy a living man ever had." His voice rose under his emotion. The woman caught the infection. Her tall form straightened again in the unsteady light as if youth, sleeping within her, had received an electric shock. In the far depths of her fading memories, some tribal instinct heard and responded to the call to war. Ninety years had weighted her with their burdens, but the savage was still alive.

"He shall die!" she said simply.

"No, he shall live, live to rot in prison and eat out his soul with remorse and unsatisfied revenge, live as a chained beast lives, and die at last as the dog dies—may God give me eternal damnation if—I—forgive—forgive—" He tore at his throat, gasped, and in a paroxysm of rage and grief threw out his arm, falling full length and senseless upon the floor. Instantly the aged black seemed imbued with new life. She sank beside him, her face close to his, her hands on wrist and temple. Reaching back she snatched from a crevice in her chimney a long keen knife and drew his hand to her lap. When she released it, blood trickled down the wrist, and the writhing figure lay stilled. "Live," he heard her say, as his vague gaze rested upon her. "Live to kill." A flush swept over his face, and his eyes closed wearily.

CHAPTER III.

"SPEAK, IS SHE LIVING?"

The name of the man who had taken refuge in the cabin of the negress that summer night was Chilon Marbeau. He was a fugitive from justice, but no hard pressed one. He came in pursuance of plans carefully laid and pondered for many a year. Waiting and watching for an opportunity had frozen the youth in his face and put his soul into his eyes. Plans were laid in expectation that his opportunity would come; it did come: he seized upon it, and followed them out exactly. No feature had failed. He reached the river at the point aimed for, found the little boat as anticipated and came to the cabin as he had come in his dreams a thousand times. No one was on his trail; no man could have followed the zig-zag route he had chosen. Whatever his reasons for hiding, there was little cause to fear pursuit from the outer world after he had crossed the threshold of the woman's cabin. The uncertain quantity in his calculation had been her life. If she were dead there was no safety for him in the neighborhood; but the river was there and the boat, and on the coast, lumber ships were loading for foreign ports. Escape was easy when once the cabin had been reached; but escape was not the only aim in the life of this man.

Chilon Marbeau in choosing this refuge, had done so with consummate skill and perfect knowledge of all that offered for the purposes in mind. The civilized sections of the world did not contain for him a safer place than Silvy's cabin. Isolated upon a great plantation, whose acres were numbered by the thousands, distant from roads and byways, it was a place that white men would not stumble upon in years; but the most fortunate fact for his purposes lay in the calling and character of the occupant, for Silvy was the last and most noted in her

day of all those voodoos or "doctors" once famous in the south. Her giant frame, her pale gray eyes, wrinkled face and white hair, her knowledge of herbs and medicine, and the fact that she had brought her practices and superstitions from Africa, all combined to make her a being feared and reverenced. In truth there did not live a negro who would, even with permission and in daylight, have entered her house, nor for that matter have opened his mouth about her under any circumstances. When her services were needed for any purpose, the visitor called from a distance and if she chose to respond she went forth. If she did not the visit must be repeated until her convenience or whim was suited. She still drew her rations from the family smoke house, and was the recipient of many small contributions from her patients and patrons. But none interfered with her.

The chief danger that imperiled the man's plans lay in the enfeebled mental and physical condition of the woman. Upon her he depended for information of which he had been for ten years deprived.

Chilon Marbeau realized the calamity that threatened him when he recovered from the spell that bodily fatigue and the long mental strain had brought upon him. When he opened his eyes the negress was sitting by his side crooning a rude lullaby and evidently impressed with the idea that he was still the little child that had been wont many years before to make her cabin his play ground. The memory of those old days, when he used to lie there and listen to her queer myths—days full of sunshine and happiness, the golden days of youth, rose within him with almost suffocating tenderness. All associated with them were gone forever! Only himself, as far as he knew, and this tottering human wreck remained. And what was he?

Recovering his steadiness, although still weak, he began eagerly to try to bring her mind back to the present and to recent events, but seemingly in vain. The startling suddenness and manner of his appearance and

his contagious excitement and passion, had, for the moment, aroused her drooping mind. But it had lapsed again into lethargy. One name, "Lena," was ever upon his lips; or "Celeste," his sister's, and his Uncle Charles; he tried them all in vain. The sounds seemed to carry no message to her bewildered senses.

Her subsequent history was marked by flashes of mental activity under the stimulus of accidental memories; and sometimes for hours she succeeded in connecting herself closely with the present; but her moods were variable and uncertain. All that the impatient man could hope for, then or afterwards, was to take advantage of her moments of consciousness, and gradually extract from her such points of the desired information as she might possess; and this he soon found exceedingly difficult, for when sanity departs through age, habit is still strong, and reticence had been the lifelong habit of this strange woman.

So it was that while he rested, only little by little could he gain from her any information of his family and the changes that had taken place since his departure; and of the truth of this he was not sure. Questions alarmed her cautious nature and when directly interrogated, she was apt to close her mouth in obstinate silence. When he attempted to lead her mind to the subject nearest his heart, ofttimes she would ramble off on events that antedated his very existence.

Once at midnight, baffled by the strange limitations of his existence, having wandered away and viewed the familiar house of his boyhood from the distance, brooding in the shadows, he returned and burst into the cabin, crying passionately:

"Is she living or dead? Can't you see, can't you see the suspense is killing me?" As the vibration of one note sometimes recalls a whole song, so his voice startled her again into partial consciousness. She gave him a long pitying look and shook her head.

"Do you mean dead?" he asked, his voice failing him

with sudden weakness—"you do not mean dead?" Again she looked upon him steadily a moment, only to turn away in silence. "Speak to me, Mammy," he pleaded, plucking her sleeve, "you must, you must! Where is Lena, where is my wife?" The woman looked with genuine sorrow into his eager face; of this he was sure. "She is dead then," he said in despair, "dead—lost to me forever! It was too late!" Her head sank upon her breast; his hand relaxed, and he turned away his face that even she might not behold its abject misery. She arose then, slowly, and brought him a gourd of water.

"Drink!" she said simply, "it is too late!"

He was for hours silent. One of the two incentives that had sustained him so many years was gone. It was his one day of weakness, the one day that almost saw the white flag upon his citadel. Afterwards he tried to turn his mind from its despair and bring to its support the wonderful spirit that had so long helped him defy fate. But love was gone!

The woman mumbled away the hours, and more than once he heard the name of his wife upon her lips. And then at last the broken threads tied themselves in her wavering mind and she told graphically of a runaway horse, of entangled skirts and a dead woman. A cry burst from his lips. In his mother's family there had been a Lena, and so had she died thirty years ago! The woman still looked upon him with sorrow:

"Too late! too late!" she muttered. But hope had been born again with him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECORDS FOUND.

The situation of Chilon Marbeau was at that time without parallel in history or fiction. Absolutely free to come and go, he was also absolutely cut off from all channels of information. His only safe point of contact and communication with the world was this singular old woman, whose mind was already losing its hold upon that world, whose memory was defective and habits such as to render it practically useless outside her house. His shoes were now nearly gone, his clothing dilapidated to the last degree, and hat he had none. He could not therefore venture into the city after dark for more supplies, even had he any money wherewith to purchase or were indiscreet enough to take the risk. His appearance was such that he would not have dared to ask a question of or apply to any person for work. He was, to look upon, a veritable wildman of the swamp, one who would be a prey to suspicious police in the city, an object of dangerous curiosity and gossip in the country. He realized it all too well.

Still there was in him a sense of freedom, so novel, so restful, that much of his feverish impatience passed away, a freedom so sweet that every morning his first realization of it sent a new flush of pleasure from heart to cheek. What the future held he could not guess; he had his plans, but they were impossible until he could ascertain the condition and circumstances of his family and his present necessities were supplied. But in the meantime he had freedom.

Mere food soon became an object for him to strive after; for the slender stores of the old woman seemed to be exhausted. He helped her in the only possible way. He knew the treasures of that old cabin and where to find lines and hooks. He fixed up an abundant sup-

ply and set them by night in the bayou and under the river willows. And in this occupation he stretched his limbs in a fuller freedom, paddling his boat, while the lines hung in the dark waters, up stream as far as the city to gaze upon its lights, its trains roaring across the bridges overhead, and listen to its lessening sigh as it sunk into slumber. It was a novel sensation for him, bareheaded, and in rags, to be lurking in the shadow of some tree in sight of those familiar steeples and in sound of their bells. His companions had been gay ones there, hightoned, chivalric, full of the southern fire and gallantry. Were they married and settled now? Were they men of prominence? The prospects of none had been brighter than his. And he at thirty-two was an outlaw hiding in the shadows by his native city.

The only reflection that gave him comfort at such times was that while he had come back without knowledge of any facts that had transpired within his family circle during ten years, the family were probably as ignorant of his life; and only one man in the world abroad had known his real name. But for that one man he might dare all. How much had been revealed? That he must ascertain.

His freedom, broad as it was, became at length too limited for his youth and impatience; and with the full return of his physical and mental forces came something of the old recklessness that characterized his boyhood. Clothing would never come to him by chance, nor would information. And the will is king! He determined to settle for once and all the mystery that overhung his family. He would enter the house of his uncle!

On the night of the day that brought this decision, Chilon turned his back upon the swamp when he left the cabin and passed up the hill to the great plateau that constituted the arable lands of Ravenswood, and soon found himself in front of the Marbeau mansion. It was a massive, old colonial building whose every detail

was indelibly fixed upon his memory. Change is slow upon the southern plantation, and time, as far as he could judge, seemed to have spared this house. He had gone forth from it a light-hearted boy; change had not spared him. Stilling the rising tumult in his bosom he passed noiselessly through the shrubbery of the front yard well hid in the shadow, and performed once more a feat common in his old boyish days of misrule; he swung himself into a giant cedar that stood near the rear and dropping lightly upon the roof of the side veranda found himself at the window of his once well-known room. The shutters opened stiffly to his touch, and the sash responded unwillingly, but there was little noise. In a moment more Chilon stood again in his old quarters.

The situation was now full of uncertainty, if not danger; he did not know that his uncle still occupied the house, nor that the room he had entered was empty.

Chilon ascertained that the room was not occupied by touching the bed. The bedding had been removed. Closing the shutters carefully he lit a bit of candle that he had provided and with deep emotion gazed about the familiar place. Only the bedding was gone. Otherwise the room was as he had left it. He could not, viewing the well-known objects about him, realize that youth had passed since his eyes last beheld them and his footsteps echoed in that room. In the corners were his saddle and oars, his gun case, riding boots and jointed rod; on the walls the same old pictures. In the closet he found, even, some of his clothing still hanging as he had left it, but moth-eaten into ruin. He turned from it all, touched and saddened. His belongings had not been cast out. They awaited his coming.

The presence in that room of these objects carried to him also another meaning. The house had not changed hands. Extinguishing his candle, for the rooms were all transomed, he made his way through the silent hall toward the stairs. He waited by the door of the room that

had been Lena's, listening intently. No sound came from within. Gently he tried the latch. It was locked, and then his hand touched the key on the outside. Saddened, he passed on, descended the stairway and stood by his uncle's door. It was half open, and within the room he heard the deep, strong breathing of a man. With noiseless footsteps he left it, and entered the library.

As in that dear old room, with its East India lounge and cool leathern chairs so well remembered, he relit his candle, a low cry of triumph escaped him. Upon the center table under the extinguished reading lamp were letters addressed to his Uncle, Charles Marbeau, and near them, newspapers. He caught up the latter as a famishing man seizes upon food, for through them he was again in touch with the world. The object of his venture had been accomplished and so profound was his satisfaction that he prepared at once to depart, when a new idea flashed into mind. If these papers were so valuable, the preceding issues were doubly so.

The library at Ravenswood was supplied on all sides with shelving reaching to the ceiling and closed in by glass doors. But the lower three feet projected and were closed by separate doors and used for files of certain papers, and for magazines and pamphlets. The arrangement and custom were well remembered by the silent visitor. Throwing open these latter doors he bent to ascertain if the family custom had continued. Upon the files of bound papers his finger traced backward the dates. None were missing. They were all there, the sealed years of life in the world from which he had been isolated so long. He selected several of these—1873, 1874, 1875—and immediately withdrew. In the hall above he could not resist the temptation to enter the locked apartment. It was, of course, vacant, but a vase held a long-withered rose that shattered at his touch. He stood a few moments resting his forehead against the mantel, and then without a second glance about him withdrew hurriedly, almost precipitately.

CHAPTER V.

THE VOODOO'S SECRET.

But outside the house his mood changed. The volumes he bore were dearer than life, by far; they were to arm him with knowledge of past events and settle forever, perhaps, the doubts that were consuming him. Although he had become accustomed to self-control, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could restrain his excitement when he reached the cabin and deposited his precious burden. He looked up under the spell of a penetrating gaze and found the woman's eyes fixed upon him, uneasiness expressed in her aged face. Whether she had affected much of the ignorance and imbecility with which she had received his questions or whether a transient sanity was at that moment in control, the man realized that she understood the situation and was uneasy. She spent her time night and day for the most part dozing above the flame or embers on her hearth, and to this occupation she now returned. Thrusting a piece of lightwood into the coals Chilon began to explore his treasures, but ever and anon he glanced up into the wrinkled face to find the strange eyes fixed steadily upon him.

"What is it, Mammy?" he asked carelessly as he turned the pages. There was no answer for so long a time he forgot his own question; but at length she said simply:

"Silvy's hair was black an' her eyes were dark."

"Ah?" He continued his reading. She said no more. Presently as he turned page after page he repeated the words to himself. "Silvy's hair was black and her eyes were dark;" and then he, too, began to study the flames. The words did not amount to much, but the easy, confident tones so different from her usual mumblings clung to him. "How could Silvy's eyes have been dark?" he

asked himself idly. "Silvy's eyes were gray, pale gray. Does age change the color of one's eyes?" The violet eyed babe always became the brown-eyed, he had heard; and his own eyes, he had been told, varied their shades, as did those of many people, with moods or changing conditions of health. But did anyone's eyes ever pass from dark to light and so remain? Could even drugs effect this? Besides, why this remark at such a time?

Chilon knew the indirectness of the African mind.

"What changed them, Mammy?" he asked at length, with curiosity.

"My mother," she said simply and without hesitation. The alteration of her manner would have been enough to startle him had there been no meaning in her words. He let his pages fall back into their places.

"Your mother! To make you—a doctor, was it?" She nodded her head. When he looked at her again her strange eyes were fixed upon him with the peculiar expression he had before remarked. Under the impulse of a startling idea he rose suddenly to his knees, his limbs shivering. Some subtle power had transferred her meaning. He touched her shriveled arm.

"Can you," he began. She looked away quickly. "Mammy! Mammy! if you will, the man who put irons upon these arms, who robbed me of all that makes life beautiful, who stole my youth and freedom—." She started violently. His voice was now ringing out into the night, and she stood erect with sudden energy. Again in her face he saw for one brief moment the flash of a savagery that time could not entirely subdue. "You know what it is," he continued passionately, "to be robbed of these, to be plucked from life and friends and hope—." A cry escaped her. "You know what it is to eat out your heart waiting for revenge that never came! —help me, Mammy, help me!"

She trembled violently before the appeal and the rush of memories it had stirred. She put her finger with

pathetic tenderness and respect upon his head, and then his cheek as he knelt.

"You will be old—old—old. There ain't no way back!"

"I am old already. Revenge will make me young."

"It will take time—a long time!"

"Let it be years, but promise!"

She stood a moment in deep thought.

"Dreams will come," she said, touching his forehead, "dreams! Some of them will stay." He reflected upon her answer. She meant hallucinations.

"I will risk them all," he said. "The new cannot be sadder than the old!" For answer she went slowly to her room and stretched herself upon her cot. She never again spoke upon the subject.

CHAPTER VI.

"REVENGE IS IMMORTAL."

Left alone by the flickering flame Chilon aroused himself from the half stupor into which reaction had plunged him, and opened a volume of papers again. This time he read the telegraphic reports of 1874. Upon a date graven indelibly in his mind, he found this dispatch from the Associated Press:

"The police to-day made an important capture in the person of Carl Garner, the youngest and most dangerous counterfeiter that ever operated extensively in the United States. The man has been known by name to the government detectives for several years, and there are standing rewards for his arrest amounting to $2,000; but so successful have been his precautions, all efforts to get a full description of him have failed. It has been known for a year that a surprise in the youth of this criminal awaited the public, but the result was even more remarkable than imagined. The police decline to state just how his capture was effected, but knowing ones say that a confederate must have betrayed him, for it had been many months since he was actively engaged in his nefarious profession, and when seized had in his possession spurious bills of a new counterfeit issue that had not made its appearance anywhere. The new counterfeit is remarkable from the fact that it is printed upon apparently genuine government paper, and is so nearly perfect that only a microscopic comparison with a genuine bill reveals any difference. Every cashier to whom it has been submitted at first pronounced it genuine. A treasury expert, however, pointed out a slight variation, which for good reasons will not be made known until it is ascertained definitely whether or not any of the issue has been floated. The accused man is persistent in his denial that he is Carl Garner or a counterfeiter by pro-

fession, but declares that he is by force of circumstances compelled to remain silent as to his true identity. It is the opinion of detectives, however, that he is the go-between of a dangerous band of operators, and is playing a deep and skillful game to shield them. They are confident that, despite his youth, the right man has been arrested, a conclusion not perhaps unnatural in view of the large reward in sight. Garner is to be examined before a commissioner to-day."

The face of the man in the cabin was a study as he lifted it from the page, and sat in silent reverie. Slowly he turned the pages and took up again the history of the case that interested him so deeply.

"The counterfeiter, Carl Garner, was on yesterday brought before the United States commissioner for examination. He is a young man, a little above the medium height, with dark hair and bright, brown eyes, nothing in his appearance indicating the criminal, although marks of dissipation were clearly apparent The closest examination did not bring out any new facts in his case. He persisted in maintaining an obstinate silence as to the whereabouts of the plates and the names of his confederates; for it is certain that these exist, since no man of the prisoner's age could have alone produced such works of art as the plates undoubtedly are. He denied again that he is Carl Garner, and that he is a counterfeiter; but he would not state his true name, birthplace nor occupation. He admitted, however, that he knew that the bills found upon his person were counterfeits, and even that he printed them himself; but his sole object, he declared, was to start an excitement about the bills and then deliver the plates to the government for a reward. The plates, according to his story, came into his possession by chance, had never been criminally used, and are where they can never again be used. His associate in this enterprise, he declared, had betrayed him for the larger and more certain reward, and was in all probability the man wanted as Carl Garner. He offered

to get the plates and deliver them to the authorities if given his freedom, but said he would die before he would betray to anyone their whereabouts and thereby bring disgrace and dishonor to innocent people. He adhered to this resolution even when it was shown that the effect would be disastrous to him, while a confession accompanied by a surrender of the plates would get him off lightly and even, perhaps, go far toward substantiating his story. In default of bail in the sum of $20,000, he was bound over to await the action of the district court."

Again the hand of the silent man turned the pages. His eye found and rested upon this record:

"The now noted counterfeiter, Carl Garner, was arraigned in the United States district court on yesterday charged with the crime of counterfeiting. He appeared without counsel, and His Honor, Judge William Brown, appointed young Mr. Wilbur Sterns to defend him. The trial developed nothing additional to what has already been printed. The prisoner repeated his story without material variations, and it produced a favorable impression upon many who were present. One of the treasury's most skilled detectives gave as his opinion that the story was true in every particular, and that the whole difficulty was the result of a youthful indiscretion and an exaggerated idea of family honor. Judge Brown, however, said that the reputation of a country's currency was too sacred to be trifled with; that a laboring man's money represented his toil and economy, the future welfare of himself, his wife and his children; that next to protecting a man's life, the highest duty of a government was to protect the results of a man's labor; that the prisoner was technically guilty by his own admission, even though he had intended no greater harm than to force his government to buy something that, as a loyal citizen, he was in honor bound to deliver free. But the story had not been proven true; indeed, it was a very improbable story, and even were he disposed to discharge the prisoner on parole and his promise to surrender the dan-

gerous plates, there was no law to justify such an action. He could therefore, he said, give the prisoner full credit for truth without seeing his way to help him; for if the government was to be denied the privilege of destroying the plates, it was bound to do the next best thing possible—destroy the power of the man who controlled them. He thereupon called upon the prisoner to make his final decision in the matter, intimating that a confession and surrender of the plates would secure for him the lightest possible sentence. The prisoner then read this brief and affecting statement which he had prepared: 'Circumstances prevent acceptance of the conditions imposed upon me. No stain has ever, within my knowledge, rested upon the name of my family. I will never be the first to stain it. The plans that I had in view were the plans of an inexperienced, credulous boy led astray by dissipation and bad associates, and contemplated only selling to the government dangerous counterfeit plates that had not been used. Of course, the whole scheme was wrong, but the wrong shall end in me. I will not break the hearts of people who love me. A lifetime in prison will not change my decision.'

"The court ordered this statement filed with the papers in the case, and thereupon sentenced the prisoner to twenty years in the penitentiary, upon three counts in the indictment, the full limit of the law. So ends a very remarkable case. The frank manliness of the prisoner produced a profound impression and many exclamations of sympathy and pity followed him as he was led away. Judge Brown said afterwards that he had no choice left but to proceed as he had, but that never in all his experience had he been more inclined to believe in the sincerity of a statement that his judgment told him was untrue. He predicts that a confession will yet follow."

The reader searched every line of the paper for additional mention of the case, and found this in the editorial columns:

"Dispatches of to-day bring us particulars of the trial

and conviction of a young man arrested in New York as Carl Garner for counterfeiting. The remarkable features of the case are the prisoner's persistent denial of his identity and his statement that his innocence can only be proven by revelations that will bring distress and dishonor upon innocent people. He insisted that his embarrassment was due to dissipation and bad associates, and declared his willingness to expiate his offense by sacrificing his life and liberty.

"Twenty years was the sentence imposed upon him. Twenty years! Think of this, our young reader, when you are first tempted to wander from the parental roof at night, to take your first glass of beer, or heed the appeals of vice in any form! Here is a man just of age, born, it is likely, in good circumstances, reared by loving parents and given every advantage that a Christian community can furnish, gone from all these to a living tomb!

"Twenty years! When he comes forth, confinement will have made him an old man. Youth will have been long since dead in his heart. Parents perhaps,—twenty years is a long time,—will have grown sick and weary of waiting and have passed away heartbroken. If he is heir to property, others will have succeeded to it. If he had a child of his own it will have grown to manhood or womanhood and will know him not. Indeed, how can he, with the smell of the convict upon his garments, claim kinship, sympathy, friendship with any of those who believed him at least honorably dead?

"And if he has a wife, she too will be nothing to him. If so constituted that she cannot survive a prolonged grief and the uncertainty of his fate, she too may perish; but as he lies at night in his lonely cell there is a worse thought than this,—to us the most terrible that could come to a convict so situated; he must see that wife waiting and watching and losing faith, her love growing cold; and distrust followed by hatred and contempt, taking its place, until some day she casts it all

out and, in her loneliness, loving less madly than she did at first, turn at last for comfort to a nobler man."

The reader, who had unconsciously begun to pronounce aloud the lines of this word picture, his voice trembling with repressed excitement, paused and struggled up to his knees. Behind him in the doorway of the little room the voodoo was crouching, having crawled from her couch, her eyes blazing with passion. The man had paused above the page that still held his gaze fascinated by the convict's doom foretold thereon. Again he began: "In his heart he cannot blame her; but he must realize that when the twenty years end, he will issue from prison with no friend alive and no object in life!" The volume closed with a sharp crash. Chilon was on his feet now, his face transformed. A sound attracted his attention—or was it the concentration of her fixed gaze? He turned and looked into the voodoo's face.

"Ah," he cried, "the man who wrote that had never been a felon! He did not know! Love may perish, but revenge is immortal!" He paused abruptly. The woman's lids closed gently over her pale eyes and a strange smile overspread her wrinkled countenance. Slowly, after the manner of some great reptile, she drew back into the darkness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

Chilon spent the next night in the swamp. The little bayou had an almost imperceptible current and sitting in his boat, his chin upon his breast, he let it drift at will. The night was cloudy and intensely dark, for the water-way led under the spreading branches of great oaks and beeches and canopies of tangled vines. No sound came to him except that strange sweet murmur that belongs to all great swamps, which is like unto nothing in nature unless it be the sad voice in the human heart that physicians know. It may have been this note that insensibly attracted him into the gloom rather than the open fields; and there it was that he first betrayed his presence to any one of the neighborhood.

His mind was busy with the memories that had been so vividly flashed upon it by the record, and unconscious of his surroundings the little craft passed silently into an open space and emerged upon the starless water; but noiseless though it was, two men, negroes, crouching over their fishing lines by a bed of coals, where blazed a lightwood torch, saw him and sprung to their feet. The light and their exclamations drew his attention, but too late to avoid detection. One of the men suddenly swung the torch above his head, and leaning forward, said loudly: "Who dat?" Chilon made no motion, and the scene then presented to these representatives of a most superstitious people was a boat, white in the glow of the torch, holding a wild, haggard, bareheaded and half-clad man. Responsive to the moving torch, fantastic shadows leaped among the trees, and somewhere an owl uttered his inquiring note. With loud cries the men, dropping their brands, rushed back into the night, the sound of breaking bush and rotten wood indicating for some moments their continued flight. The

man in the boat weighed the circumstance and soon perceived its value. To have it rumored that a haunt was abroad in the swamps would render it a safer refuge. He lifted his voice and sent a prolonged shriek after the fleeing negroes, a cry weird and wild that set a thousand echoes afloat. Chilon himself started as he heard it coming back to him from every side, doubled and distorted until the night was hideous with its unearthly discord. As it died away he bowed his head into his hands and shuddered. Unconsciously he had given expression to the discord within him born of his grief and passionate rebellion. It was the first time he had heard his own voice unrestrained in all those years, and the echoes that laughed back at him were from the nights made hideous by vain regrets behind prison bars. He had cried aloud as he had wished to cry a thousand times when he felt those bars across his face, cold iron at first, and then hot, searing his very heart. But not a cry had escaped him. There was an iron will within that upheld him; for was not his chance to come some day when a record for good behavior had been made?

The boat in silence and loneliness drifted on. Chilon had thrown himself face down within it, and for the time yielded himself to the bitterness of his fate. Hours must have passed when he aroused himself to find the swift river hurrying him seaward. For a moment the impulse to let the stream have its will, to pass out into the distant sea and find a harbor at last on some foreign shore, almost overcame him; but he put aside the temptation resolutely, and turning his back upon the swarming demons that had tormented him, bent himself to the task of guiding his craft back into the haven of the swamp. Day was breaking when he entered the empty cabin. He threw himself upon his pallet and fell asleep; and as he slept the woman came again and bent over his wearied frame chanting her weird songs. Her eyes grew humid at times with tenderness; at times they flashed forth steely gleams of light.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOUND THAT WOULD NOT HEAL.

In her queer way, the African woman was physician, ıgician, alchemist and pharmacist. She knew every rub and bulb of the country, and their effects upon the rves, the organs and the muscles of the human sys- n. She knew how to fill the mind with fancies and nd the imagination to her ends. She came of a race ıt from the days of Pharaoh recognized the power of : mind over matter; for faith cure is older than the ramids. Long habit had linked her incantations to her .k and become a part of her trade, for minds can steep :mselves in deception until they are themselves de- ved.

There were other agencies than human that combined her service if the undertones of the African society uld be trusted, for no living thing of all God's beauti- world would for long make its home with her. If she ɔk to the cabin a little kitten, it grew into shy cathood d accepted a grim mate from the canebrakes where : went to hunt young rabbits, and when motherhood ne, caught the contagion of their wildness and made · a lair in the trunk of some fallen tree. Her turkeys ɜted wild and came no more except in dead of winter crane their necks from a distant covert and gaze, with lf memories, at dawn, upon the cabin lights. Her cks, too, mated with the Mallards or the Carolinas, and fted out in sunny days upon the river. Birds she had ırs ago, but they were noteless and died with heads der their wings.

Be this as it might, the visible agencies of her calling re plentiful. Out from among the rafters and corners · ingredients came as needed. No man could read her mulas; they were wordless, but she knew them all. e mother, in the singular division of her people's social

organization, was the sole university of the daughter, and nature was the one great wholesale supply house. There were the queer little bottles, with their infusions and decoctions, clear liquids and liquids deepening into the roots and twigs, whose essential elements they contained. And there were the spiders floating in an amber fluid, five drops of which would lessen the strength of the fiercest pulse, the lizard coiled in oil that made supple the rheumatic joints of age; and sprainwort for sprains. Tanzy, too, was there, and sage and mint and mullein, bark of the red oak for its tannic acid, hoarhound for coughs, and pine splinters for turpentine. And there were milkweed to cure fits, and mole claws to hang about the necks of teething babes.

These and a hundred other nostrums she had in store, many long worthless. For times had changed; the new race was in reach of ambitious doctors and the old system was passing out of fashion. Even at this time her help was sought chiefly by women in labor, who still believed in the potency of a "hand that had smothered a mole," and by those who wished the protection of "conjure bags," the little amulets once so popular. The old practitioner had nearly reached her end. The time would soon come when the last and greatest of the voodoos would pass away.

But these herbs hanging from her rafters and clustered about the recesses of the cabin gave it an uncanny appearance to eyes that viewed them from a distance, and thus strengthened its defenses.

This day she labored with new vigor as she sang; and on her table were roots and culms and bulbs of nameless plants that grow in southern swamps. Some thought was with her as she labored, some fancy or memory. A skilled reader of the human face would not have selected love as the quickening power behind the singular revival of vital forces that supplied her aged limbs with energy. So thought Chilon, when, waking from a troubled sleep, he lay with aching joints and

silently watched her toil. The look upon her face was the same it wore the previous night when her lids sank over the pale eyes and she drew back into the shadow. It was a flash from the savagery that lurked in the shadows of her soul, a savagery that would endure for an eternity if necessary to avenge a wrong. He read it by the light of the inward flame that fired his own lagging soul to action.

The long day ended, Chilon arose and partook of the simple food set before him. When the shadows deepened he laid his hand upon the woman's shoulder and said:

"Someone has wronged you. Mammy! Who is it?" She had resumed her low chair and her usual crouching attitude. She looked upon him with an increasing intelligence as her mind struggled back out of its vapors. "Tell Chilon," he continued, "he will find him some day. Who is the man?"

Again the strange wild eyes blazed with their steely light.

"The man you wait for." She spoke the words gently, but confidently.

"No," he replied, after a moment's thought; "he could not have harmed you." She did not answer him for so long that he imagined the curtain had fallen across her mind again. Her next action revealed his mistake. Her claw-like fingers slowly undid the collar of her dress and drew aside the covering until the shoulder was exposed and a wound four or five inches long, such a wound as the last foot of a rawhide in the hand of an angry man would produce upon a tender skin. He started, amazed and distressed, his eyes riveted upon the spot. It was an old cut, angry and festering still.

"Hit's de only lick Silvy ever got," she said, quietly, "an' hit won't heal while he lives! Hit can wait!" She fell into silence again.

Chilon went forth at midnight carrying the bound papers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIDNIGHT MEETING.

Ravenswood, the home of the Marbeaus, was one of the great landed estates for which the old south was noted, but it differed from the majority in possessing every adjunct that wealth and cultivated taste could supply. The house, originally colonial in its general appearance, reflected the moods of successive owners in the changes and additions, presenting in the growth of its better days an aspect somewhat divided between the English country residence and the French chateau of a hundred years ago. The interior furnishings were antique, many of them having been picked up abroad before the war. The decorations were few and the dominant note was simplicity. That it was a house that had been "lived in," impressed every visitor. Its dumb walls seemed to have absorbed and learned to reflect something of the easy hospitality of the gracious men and women who reigned there in the good old days, and every article of furniture exhibited a dignified friendliness.

It was a large house of many apartments, the majority of them closed and out of use. Its ball room was above, and was the counterpart of the state dining room that extended toward the rear. Both had long been abandoned, the former to become the depository of a vast aggregation of things which, too sacred for exile, must perforce be given honorable retirement; the latter in favor of a smaller room better suited to the family needs. Gayety had long since fled from Ravenswood.

The old house looked over and down from the pleateau upon which it stood into a deep valley where slept a placid lake whose heart beat through the succeeding hours of day and night in a little hydraulic machine that distributed water where needed, the slow monotonous rhythm well in keeping with the brooding quiet of the

residence. Near by was a water mill, generally still, and at the water's edge tall grasses bent to cool their shadows in pellucid depths. Around the lake the wooded lands came gently down and girdled the inverted castles of the sky with wreaths of color as the seasons changed.

With the death of slavery began the passing of the many servants that kept up Ravenswood. Gradually the house shrunk into itself a little, the great flower gardens lost their well kept aspect and life settled down into a smaller suite of rooms as indicated by the many drawn blinds. For following the political had come family changes equally as radical.

Into this scene came Chilon the second night, his feet tracing out the old and well known environments and bringing him at length before the darkened residence. He had seen from the distance light in an upper room. Who was the occupant? No servant ever slept within the main building. Who was his uncle's guest? Whether it had been extinguished or shut in by heavy damask curtains he could not decide. It was no longer visible.

The discovery made caution imperative. Whoever dwelt there must be avoided; and so when, having entered his room again, he passed on through the hallway and down to the library, he might have been, so far as the prying eyes of a visitor could decide, only the ghost of some dead Marbeau come back to visit the scenes of his youth.

But in the library he found everything as he had left it, the odor of his uncle's pipe being still strong upon the air. Relighting the lamp he ran his eyes over the open papers and saw the usual chronicle of daily events, all strange, and possessing for him no interest. Wearily putting them aside he drew from the lower shelves another file of the old papers. The thought came to him that there was little danger in reading there; and he had found his burden hard to carry over the difficult route that fate compelled him to accept. He adopted the

suggestion and began again to search the records, the local news being still the line of interest. One by one old acquaintances seemed to rise to view and pass away, some to foreign lands, some to their burial. There were business changes of familiar firms, births, marriages and the happenings of the social world,—the dances, receptions, excursions and functions of even less importance and of no interest except for the names they contained. At length his finger rested upon an item and a low cry escaped his lips. The item was in the department devoted to reprints from other journals and was very brief. It merely related that one of the accomplices of the men engaged in the great Kansas train robbery had been arrested and had confessed. Among the names of the guilty as given by this man was "Chilon Marbeau." He sat long in profound thought. Only one man in the world would have been apt to wear his name. Had he been convicted? Was he now in prison? Henceforth there must be a new direction of his search. But a greater sensation awaited him; this time he found in the society column the simple announcement: "Miss Lena Marbeau, of Ravenswood, is visiting her aunt, in this city!" "Miss" Lena Marbeau. That one word possessed for him a deep significance. "They have persuaded her to this," he said. "There has been no revelation. She has simply taken up again her maiden name and waits,—waits for me. The family have taken her back! 'Chilon is not dead,' that is what she tells herself and she keeps her faith, she waits for me. I will return, I will return," he said, brokenly, "some day, to vindicate that faith, and make her happy." He could read no more that night. He closed the book softly and bent his face above it. "Yes, dear God," he said, "dear God, I will return! I will free my name of infamy and make her happy!"

As thus he sat, a sound came faintly to his ear that instantly aroused him to a sense of his situation. It was the sound of a door closing; and then came footfalls

upon the stairs. He looked around him, grown cool now that actual danger threatened. The broad, dark under-recess of the library decided him. In a moment he had crept inside and drawn together the doors. Pushing aside the green baize that covered the glass he had but a moment to wait. A woman in her dressing gown stood in the doorway, candle in hand, looking about her in surprise. There was no hesitation in the decision of his heart. It sent the blood in one great wave to his head, where it stood still so long that he almost succumbed. Then it started off in fierce excitement, for this woman, gazing about her and evidently puzzled to find the library lamp burning, was, when last he beheld her, Lena Marbeau, his wife.

The hidden man gazed upon the face illumined by two lights with indescribable emotion. There had been few changes; the girlishness had given place to a sweeter womanliness, and it was whiter; that was all. The smooth contour was there, the same liquid, brown eyes that pleaded so eloquently for love and tenderness, the same mass of black-brown hair tumbling down over neck and shoulders. All came back to him like a dream from the years wasted and flown forever. He longed to leap forth and throw himself into her arms; to tell her of his deathless love and faith and belief, to take her to his heart and bring back again out of the sadness that had engulfed it, her beautiful smile. His hand was against the little door; he drew it back with sudden, almost frantic haste.

"God, in heaven!" he whispered, "save me! What am I? She would flee from such as I,—she would die of horror!" He dashed the mists from his eyes and, fascinated, sought her face. She crossed the room, took from the sofa a little traveling bag and extinguished the lamp. He heard her footsteps in the hall, on the stair and above; then, the opening and closing of a door. The twilight of the room had faded into darkness; all

was still again. Then the little door against which his hand rested was flung wide open. He plunged out into the darkness and fell upon his face at the place where she had stood, crying out her name, once, in agony, and pressing his lips again and again to the threshold.

As he lay there a door upstairs was opened and a few moments later closed, as if some one had stood to listen.

CHAPTER X.

"I WAS A CONVICT."

When Chilon arose weak and exhausted the darkened house was silent. In the reaction of the moment everything he had resolved to do was abandoned. He had seen her! Could he go away without speaking to her, go forth perhaps forever, and she so near? The woman was his wife; he would go to her and tell her all. She would forgive him, and her courage would sustain him in the struggle to come. Would she forgive—did she still love him? The mental questions filled him with an almost insane fear, born of jealousy. He felt then that if the morning broke upon him with his questions unanswered he was lost. He had wavered and the tumult within swept away all old plans. If he died for it on the morrow, he would see her.

The mind under pressure works quickly. Not in that garb, not with that unkempt beard and those soiled hands would he face the woman who was literally his world now. There was no necessity for it. In that house he was at home. Lighting the lamp he made his way to his uncle's dressing room, where were all the requisites for a man's toilet. With noiseless haste, but neglecting nothing, he began the task of restoring the old appearance of Chilon Marbeau as nearly as might be. The methodical habits of Colonel Marbeau were well-known to him. He could have placed his hand in the dark upon most of the articles he needed. With the lamp before him, the task was easy. Within the hour he stood before the glass, dressed as for breakfast, his beard had gone and, for the first time in many a year, in appearance a gentleman. His efforts had been to make himself as nearly as possible the wild boy that left her so long ago, and he knew that except for the settled look of sadness and the irrevocable record of a mental agony, his face had changed but little. A

crisis, the real crisis of his life, was at hand, and now that it must be encountered the thought calmed him. There must be no mistake; no tracks must be left. He forced himself to return to its exact place every article used and to remove all traces of his occupancy from the dressing room. His discarded clothing he carried to the closet of the room formerly his own. That which he had appropriated would in all likelihood never be missed. Then he went and stood silent before the door of Lena's room, the light issuing above it illumining the hall just enough to show the ghastly pallor of his face. The critical moment had arrived and the moment of peril. His life would date from the next hour.

It was an index to the changes which had made a man of a wild, reckless and somewhat selfish nature, that his first thought when he stood with hand upon the knob was for the woman within. How could he avoid for her the shock of a sudden appearance. It was also an index to the implicit faith he still felt that never for a moment did it occur to him that any other than the woman he loved was within. He decided quickly. Securing a chair he stood upon it and looked down through the transom; she was writing by the little table, her back to him, dressed as he had seen her last. The bed had been occupied and forsaken, possibly from sleeplessness, and writing was an afterthought. He descended, turned the knob slowly and steadily. The door opened without noise, and stepping within he said, in a low, natural voice, as if but a day had passed since last he issued there:

"Lena, do not be frightened; it is I, Chilon!" The pen slipped from her fingers, and these, closing convulsively, flew to her temples. A sound escaped her, a muttered prayer, perhaps, that did not open her drawn lips. The next moment he was beside her upon his knees, one arm about her waist, his face buried in the folds of her dress, while his form shook with such an outburst of passionate emotion as rendered speech impossible. She drew her hands away, and still holding them aloof,

shrank back fearfully as she gazed downward. His name escaped her lips in a whisper that would not have been audible at the door. It carried with it something so deep, so strange and unexpected, something so like a momentary horror, that the man ceased at length to shudder, and, as though listening for some voice in the far-away night, lifted his head. Slowly, fearfully, he turned his face to hers. Her hands were still drawn back from touch of him, her eyes were distended and the pallor of death covered her face. His own grew pale instantly. Slowly he withdrew his arm and shrank back as from some deadly danger. In the chill silence that followed the pulse of the little water engine sounded like clock ticks in a deserted hall.

"Too late." He spoke the words scarcely aloud. It was an explanation to himself, to the self that he felt was incapable of thought. He tried to realize his situation. He could not. He had attempted something and had failed. Dazed and uncertain, he placed his hand upon the table and sought to rise, but strength had gone from his muscles. The dumb agony in his eyes as they fell beneath her frantic gaze filled her own with sudden tears. Something terrible must have happened to affect Lena so. The next moment he remembered all. She clasped her hands over her face and gave way to a passionate weeping, and as if doubting her senses she from time to time drew them aside and turned to him her agonized face, shutting out the vision again and again. The presence of this almost hysterical outburst hushed him and filled him for the moment with fear for her mind. At length, unable longer to endure it, he arose, placed his hand upon her head with infinite tenderness, stroking gently her soft brown hair.

"Will you not speak to me, Lena?" The voice, the tones increased her emotion. She sprung to her feet and walked the room, wringing her hands and regarding him with a face so grief-stricken, so despairing, that he could find no words to speak again. Overcome at length,

she threw herself upon the bed, her sobs filling the room.

Chilon sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, trying to collect his thoughts. Minutes passed, and then her sobbing ceased. He heard her rise slowly and come to him, and he felt upon his own head the doubting, hesitating touch of her hand. It was not pity that his breaking heart cried out for; it was love; and love he felt was now for some reason impossible. Why, he could not understand; but something had happened. He took her hand down, held it a moment in his and released it, and presently, with the last effort of his pride, he stood up; but something in her white face unnerved him again and banished pride. With a loud sob he threw his arms about her.

"Lena, my wife!" he cried, "my own, my own!" She did not struggle, but lay shuddering upon his breast, his hand stroking her brown hair, while his low voice pleaded with her for love and tenderness. The face she lifted to him at last was full of anguish and despair.

"Go," she said, weakly, "you must leave the room!"

"Your room—my wife's room?" She gave way again to grief and weeping.

"Leave me; leave me!"

"Never!" he said, passionately, "never until I know from your lips that you no longer love Chilon! Tell me that and I will go, Lena, never to look upon your face again, as God is my judge!" She did not reply. "Will you say that you do not?" he said, gently; but no sound except her sobs came back. "You do love me, then?" he added, "do you not? Absence, time and neglect, as it seems to you, have not destroyed the love you once felt for me!" She would not reply. His eager eyes caught sight of a little chain of gold upon her neck. With sudden recognition he seized it and drew from her bosom a tiny medallion. He pressed his lips to the face upon it and lifted his eyes toward heaven. "I thank you, my Father!" he said, his face radiant. "Chilon lives again!" He felt the weight upon his arm increase.

Alarmed, he drew her to the bed and stretched her upon it. She was unconscious.

But as he hurriedly searched for restoratives she recovered and came to him frantically.

"'Go at once; do not wait a moment. Go, Chilon, I implore!" An unfinished letter lay upon the table. She sprung to it and crushed the sheets in her hand, her eyes turned in terror upon him. The look of unutterable despair he cast upon her banished for the moment her terror. He was wavering before her and ready to fall. His voice was faintly audible when he spoke the words fearfully:

"To whom was it?"

"Ah!" she gasped, eagerly, "to your sister! See, it begins 'Dear Celeste.'"

"Lena!" He came to her again and took her hand, "you bid me go, and I will, but let us understand each other. It may be our last meeting. Look!" He lifted the medallion she wore, and thrusting his hand into his bosom, drew a duplicate of it to view and placed them side by side. "They tell the same story. Why should you wish me to go?" Again her face was hidden by her hands.

She looked at him with a new wonder, for the first time suspecting the truth.

"Do you not know—Chilon! Chilon!—I could not stand disgrace!" He misunderstood.

"You have heard it, then?" he said, despairingly; "they have told you that I was a convict?"

"They told me, yes, but I did not know they lied. I swear to you upon my knees, Chilon, I did not know! They took advantage of my youth to deceive me. They brought me proof that you, my husband, were a train robber, a convicted robber. I would not believe it until then. I cared for nothing afterwards; I gave up. When I found that it was a lie, and you, my poor darling, were innocent, I almost died! Forgive me, Chilon, I loved you indeed; indeed I did; and I love you now better than

life; aye, more, even, than the life to come! Oh, why did you not return to me and help me! Why did you leave me to fight it out alone! Alone! Think of it—those months of loneliness; and no word from you!"

She had sunk to his feet, her arms clasping his knees, her body swaying with the violence of her excitement.

"I could not!" he said hoarsely; "could not. I was a convict!"

She did not realize it at once, but presently she stood up and holding him at arm's length looked in wonder upon his face. He replied to the unasked question:

"Yes," he said, "a convict then; an escaped convict—now; but innocent!"

She did not turn from him, but in silence sank into her chair again and hid her face. He knelt by her side and placed his arm around her. This time she did not repulse him.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS STORY.

"Let me tell you the story," he began; "you shall judge me. You cannot judge me more harshly than I have judged myself. Afterwards I will leave you, never to return, unless some day you wish for me. I came in here to-night to see you and to tell you that never for a moment since we parted has your image been dim within my heart. I have been weak and have debased myself, but, Lena, I have been faithful to you. If it had not been for you I would long ago have ended my life; but I could not fill an unknown grave leaving you to believe that I had been untrue—had deserted you. I would not let you know that I was filling a living grave. That was worse. Much as you have suffered, I have suffered more, for I was the cause of it all, and you were innocent!"

He arose and paced the floor in silence, but came again and seated himself upon a stool at her feet.

"When I went to Uncle Charles and told him of our love and asked him to permit our marriage—the marriage already consummated—he stormed and raved, as I wrote you, like an insane man. One would have thought that I was already a criminal," he said bitterly, "instead of an honorable but impulsive and weak boy, consumed by an honorable love. He threatened that if I ever spoke of the subject again to him or you he would disinherit me and drive me from the house. Had he been kinder I think the end would have been different, but I had more than a share of the Marbeau temper and replied in the same spirit, declaring my intention to win you with or without his consent. I pleaded with him for your sake and my father's. He grew frantic with rage. He struck me—he, my uncle, struck me over and over with his riding whip; and I—well, driven backward by the fierceness of his attack and blows, I reached out for a weapon.

My father's sword hung upon the wall, and my hand found it. I snatched it from the scabbard and thrust to kill. The blade passed through my uncle's shoulder, as I learned afterwards, but I saw the blood and saw him stagger. The terror of an awful guilt seized me, and I fled from the house. I wrote you that I would make a home for us and return. I have returned," he said, with infinite pathos, "but I have no home!"

Presently he continued:

"I cannot go over all the weary months of dissipation and the gradual descent after I went north. For awhile I tried hard for occupation, cheered by your letters, but they ceased——"

"I did not know where to write. Your letters were intercepted!"

He nodded his head gently. "I understand now; I ought to have known. But I was reckless and embittered. I failed everywhere. My little store of money and that which you sent to me soon disappeared, lost in gambling and drink. I found myself at length a pauper and an easy victim to others.

"You did not know our Uncle Gaston as well as I, though you were his favorite always. He was here five years, before you returned for the last time, from the convent. He was devoted to his profession. Hearing it said one day at a dinner party that a perfect counterfeit was an impossibility—he, to amuse himself, undertook to make one. His etchings and engravings were highly valued abroad, and he was, in reality, one of the most extraordinary of living artists; but some mystery overhung his life and he used a vignette only when signing. For years, at odd times, he worked upon these plates, and when he had finished them exhibited the print proofs to Uncle Charles and defied him to find a difference between them and a new five-dollar note used as copy. Uncle Charles was greatly worried over the matter, however, and asked him to destroy the plates. This he promised to do, but I suppose forgot it. When he went away to

Europe again, leaving all his outfit in the old ball-room, which was his workshop, I often amused myself with the tools, making little etchings, as I had seen him do; for I had been his companion and helper for years—almost his only companion, and possessed, as he thought, considerable talent. Uncle Gaston was a wonderful organist, and taught me, as you are aware, all of music that I knew, besides drawing and painting. One day I came across the plates and amused myself making money of common white paper. This it was that led to my ruin, for when my trunk was sent to me it contained one of these imprints and in an evil moment I showed it to one of my companions in dissipation.

"I hardly know how or where I first met Carl Garner, but from the beginning of our acquaintance the man exerted a strange power over me. Older than I, but in appearance not unlike me, he possessed a most extraordinary flow of fun and good humor that rose superior to all trials and difficulties, and these, depressed as I was, bound me to him, despite the fact that I knew him to be utterly devoid of principle. We became inseparable companions and I shared his room, neither of us knowing, frequently, where the next meal was to come from, a fact that troubled him not a bit. He had acquaintances that I never knew, and at times plenty of newly printed money, the base character of which I did not then suspect. Garner was at once intensely interested in my print and secured a genuine bill for comparison. But, warned by some instinct, I did not tell him the history of my plates; indeed, he did not even know the whereabouts of my former home.

"One day he unfolded to me a scheme which he declared harmless, but likely to bring us in plenty of money; and this was, in brief, to secure some good paper, print more money and turn it over to the detectives, with an offer to find and deliver the plates for a large reward. He had invented a story to explain our knowledge of them, a very plausible story. The whole thing amounted only

to a plan to sell the plates to the government. We had not made nor criminally used them, as I supposed, for I thought that the crime consisted in passing the bad money. I hesitated long over the scheme, since it involved my return to this house, but overborne by necessity and Garner's influence, I yielded.

"We made our way to Mammy Silvy's cabin, and entering here by my window, printed our money upon Uncle Gaston's little press. The paper and inks were supplied by Garner. But at the last moment my suspicions returned. Garner had the money and preceded me from the house. Instead of taking the plates I secreted them, determined to get the government's offer in advance. I lingered to pack a few of my things, and when alone came to this room. It was empty. I had no way to learn of your whereabouts except through Mammy Silvy, and she pretended not to know. I did not go to Celeste; I was ashamed to come back so poor. Besides, I expected to return soon. Well, we made our way north again, Garner supposing all along that I had the plates. When I told him they had been left for safety in a secret place he was furious. For two days we scarcely spoke. He was moody, and at work upon some problem, the details of which he at length completed. His plot against me, for such it was, involving, as it did, the reading of my character, the forecasting of results and a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances surrounding him, is one of the most remarkable in the annals of crime. His real name was Garner, but at that time I knew him only as Adams.

"Under the former name he was wanted by the government for many operations with counterfeit money, as I learned afterwards, and large standing rewards were offered for him. One day I was arrested by a detective as Charles Garner, and in my satchel was found the counterfeit money. Garner, or Adams, had disappeared; but the reward was, of course, paid to the detective and divided with the criminal himself. He had foreseen that I could not escape except by such a confession as would

bring ruin upon the family, and somehow he knew that I would die first."

Chilon's head sank upon his breast and he was silent. His arm lay across Lena's lap, and she let her hand rest upon his.

CHAPTER XII.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

The quick, earnest words, the tones of voice, the flashing and filling eyes, the up-turned face, the pressure upon her hand, the quiver of lips, all combined to reassert over the young woman the influence which Chilon had achieved years before. Fascinated, she hung upon his words, oblivious to time, place and the circumstances that surrounded her. She was alone with the man she had loved so long and so well. He was innocent and he loved her with a noble, self-sacrificing tenderness. These facts dawning upon her anew, as the narrative proceeded, filled her with a joy that betrayed itself in her face. But over all at length settled a melancholy, a sorrow too deep for words. As he told of his arrest and trial, and his resolution to protect their name from infamy, of his condition and long sentence, tears fell upon his hand and she bent above him until her long hair almost hid his face.

"Ah, the agony of those years," he said. "How I endured them I do not know. If I could have sent you a message without telling of my shame and disgrace, I could have stood it better. I only existed with the hope of escape, piling up in my heart bitterness and revenge."

He broke down then and shook with sobs. "This little picture was all of home that I had, and I have worn the gold upon it to the thinness of paper. Morning, noon, night it sustained me, and many a time when sleepless I have stood where the moonlight streamed through the bars and caught their beams upon it to see your face. It kept me from madness, from utter despair!

"And then my opportunity came. I was no longer a prisoner to be watched closely. My skill at the organ had given me at length an easier position and I was enabled to keep something of youth in my heart; they let me furnish the music for Sundays and for special services,

and release came through that. A woman who came to sing for the convicts many times, with a divine voice, and sympathy, read in my music innocence and the unutterable longings of a breaking heart. I told her of our love, and God be praised that women can still sin! She yielded to my prayer and gave me tools. It took months, but what are months to a prisoner at work for freedom! A day dawned that found me free. The same kind friend gave me clothing and a little money. I came away through the hills and valleys and by the running streams under the blue of the skies by day and the stars by night, to home, to liberty, to you!" He held her hands in his passionate grasp, crying:

"Lena, Lena! I have no name, but I can make one! In some foreign land I will find you a home! It will take time, years perhaps, but armed with the knowledge of your love, blessed with your trust and faith, I cannot fail. Tell me, my darling, my wife, will you come to me then?"

She did not reply. Her head had drooped until it touched and rested upon his. He put his arms about her. Her cheek was cold and her eyes closed. Presently she opened them and bestowed upon him a look that thrilled him with an awful fear. The shock, the excitement, the loss of sleep! Was she indeed dying?

"Lena! Lena!" he cried, in a changed voice; "are you ill? What is it? Speak to me, dear! It is I, Chilon, your husband!"

Her eyes were fixed—not upon him, but upon the window, and she seemed to be listening under the growing pressure of some great fear. He, too, turned and looked. The sun was just rising over the horizon. Before he could utter a word, she, still listening, still holding his arm, rose to her feet. There came to them then the sound of a man's footsteps in the hall. She ran to the door and turned the key; and as if fearing this were not sufficient bar leaned with her whole strength against it.

"Quick," she whispered, her white face looking back;

"don't stand there watching me; hide yourself. Oh! Chilon, don't you understand? Hide, hide for my sake!"

The steps grew nearer and clearer. The man in the room stood where she had left him, paralyzed with astonishment. She ran to him and pushed him toward the heavy draperies of a window. "For my sake, Chilon, for my sake!"

He found himself in the slight recess, curtained from view, bewildered, but fascinated by the mystery and the ecstacy of fear that revealed itself in her every tone and motion.

At that instant the door knob was turned and a knock followed.

"Lena," a voice said; "Lena, open the door!" To the man behind the curtain the voice came as from a by-gone age, clear, cold and irritating. He dared not touch the drapery, he shook so with fear and horror. He heard the woman's slow step cross the room, the lock click, and then, the man come in. Evidently the intruder was looking with displeasure upon her agitated face and the writing material. His first exclamation was:

"Well, what is the matter? Why are you not asleep?"

"I could not sleep," she said; "I could not!" a sob ending the sentence.

"I see," he said, coldly, "still moping and crying. Are you never going to end it?" She could not answer him. He walked across the room and began to fleck the dust from his clothing with a whisk broom. "I should think," he continued, "for the sake of your child you would throw off these moods and not fill her life with tears and long faces. What is the matter now?" he concluded crossly.

"I am ill, so ill; leave me! leave me!"

She sank in a chair and turned her face pleadingly toward him.

"I am not surprised," he said, after a momentary pause in his occupation. "You purposely destroy your health and spirits with your perpetual heroics. Still grieving for that vagabond, of course."

A peculiar expression swept over her face. She spoke at length.

"'That vagabond,' as you call him, is a gentleman. You are a cur!"

"Heigho!" he exclaimed, with affected amusement. "Well, I have only ridden out for a few moments with Uncle Charles. You will be down to breakfast, I suppose?"

"No!"

"Good-bye, then; come home when you like. Little Lena and I will try to exist, in the meantime."

He touched his hair with her brush, drew the comb through his moustache and disappeared without further remark.

Lena stood with a stony gaze fixed upon the carpet. No sound broke the stillness after the echoes of his receding footsteps died away in the hall. The scene floated about her. Dazed and bewildered she passed her hand repeatedly across her face. What had happened? What was she doing before he came? To whom was she talking? Then she sprung to her feet and stood gazing in terror upon the curtain. Was Chilon in the room—had she dreamed it all? Who was behind that curtain? No sound answered her; not a fold of drapery shook. She crept to it fascinated and touched it with her hand. Slowly she drew it aside and looked fearfully in where a man was standing with ashen face and closed eyes. She plucked his sleeve; he did not move. With a loud cry she threw her arms around him and hid her face upon his breast.

"Forgive me, Chilon, forgive me! I am not to blame!" Her grief roused him at length. "They told me, they showed me proof—they lied to me! I was crazy; I did not know what I was doing!"

"Who did this? Who robbed me of heaven, of faith in God—of you?" The menace, the calmness of his words sealed her lips. "Was it my cousin Richard Marbeau? Was it the man who entered this room?"

"Hush! Hush!" she said; "oh, what have I done?"

"Then there is another," he said quietly; "stay here. I go to meet him first!" But she threw herself against the door and barred the way.

"Chilon! Chilon! Don't! Oh, no, not now! It is ruin —ruin for all." She was struggling madly to resist him. "Chilon, hear me; oh, you do not know him! It is ruin if you kill him! If you fail it is still ruin, for he will betray you! Keep your liberty, for me. I will some day have no other friend."

She saw the hesitation and pushed him to a chair.

"There, Chilon, stay here! It is I, Lena, who begs you! I will go down. He will not come again! Stay in this room; it is mine!" She did not know what she was saying. He was silent, his white face convulsed with his emotions. She plunged her own into a bowl of water, brushed her hair with feverish haste and came to him.

"Promise me you will stay." He looked steadily into her eyes.

"Is it for my sake, or——."

"As between you two, it is for yours. May God have no mercy upon me if I do not speak the truth."

"I have never lost belief in you," he said. "I will stay." She hesitated a moment, came back quickly, touched his forehead with her lips, and passed out.

CHAPTER XIII.

BETWEEN TWO LIVES.

At the bend of the stairs Lena Marbeau paused to collect her thoughts. Up to that moment, since the meeting with Chilon, she had been hurried blindly forward upon the current of her emotions. Now she realized that some plan of action was necessary for her safety and good name, as well as for the safety of the man hiding behind her in her room. In a few moments she must descend into the library, meet the two men there and preserve a cool and collected demeanor. If only she could get into the open air for ten minutes, she thought, her head would clear itself of the confusion there, her temples throb less madly; but she dared not leave the house. If her husband were to ascend again to that room!—— She shuddered to think of the result. He might escape with his life, but no explanation could clear his mind of the suspicions that Chilon's presence there would arouse; and existence for her was bitter enough already.

She saw in advance the scene, heard his recriminations. The divorce court might follow; possibly separation from her little girl. This thought caused her to clutch the balustrade and crouch back.

Just below her was the library door, open. She heard the voices of the men there blending with the steady murmur of the waterfall at the foot of the hill, the rhythmic stroke of the little engine and the shrill, monotonous call of guinea hens in the orchard. How strange it was that with all the world at peace she should be crouching there, miserably, between two lives, one begun and ended above, the other entered into and endured below. Could she face the issue and keep her secret?

Though young in years still, Lena Marbeau had learned self-control in a bitter school and knew how to crush her own heart with smiling face. The sudden-

ness, the utter unexpectedness of the late experience had temporarily overwhelmed her; her nerves were unstrung from excitement and loss of sleep. But she fixed clearly in her mind that she was innocent of wrong doing, and that, right or wrong, she did not fear either of the two men below. One, in years gone by, had been kind and good, but in the hour of her great distress and sorrow had made life there unendurable; had practically driven her away, and had driven away by his harshness the only man she had ever loved. He had destroyed her youth and happiness, and while it was true that he had taken her back again, and was generous and forgiving, he had not brought back happiness to her heart nor light into her life.

The other—well, she feared only to look into her heart and read its estimate of him. He had deceived her in the cruelest manner; had made her untrue to the man she worshipped years ago and loved now, as she knew already, with the whole strength and passion of her nature. He stood between her and happiness. Fear? If the worst came let them beware. As long as they let her, she would be what the world demanded; but she could not, she would not, stand another stroke of cruelty. Oh, if they would—if they would give her an excuse!—She checked the thought. The safety of Chilon was at stake!

With proudly lifted head she descended the steps and passed into the room, graciously responding to their salutations, and leading the way to the breakfast table with a sweet dignity that she did not often choose to exhibit. Richard Marbeau was puzzled. What new mood was this, what game was she playing; who trying to deceive? He watched her in admiration, his peculiar mental bent revealed in the solution that it reached. Her father is getting old, he said to himself, looking toward the colonel, and in some way she has found out that I am writing his will. Oh, woman! woman! But the thought was an agreeable one.

"You have braced up wonderfully," he said to her en-

couragingly, "and I am glad that you have changed your mind. With a nap after breakfast you will be all right again. But by the way, I want to see you on a matter of business before I go, so don't drop off asleep before I come up." She smiled into his face, a thing so rare that he positively suspended eating and gazed upon her with mouth half open.

"I think I will take a little walk after breakfast," she said, "come with me and perhaps we may discuss it then."

"Not sick, I hope, daughter!" the colonel interrupted, with solicitude.

"Oh, no, indeed! I was simply sleepless last night." Both men looked to their plates, the stern, gray face of the elder softening as he imagined the cause. It was not often that she came, and this was the first night she had spent in the house since she left it because of that scapegrace. Again the manly face of the soldier changed. The set look came back.

"Go down and see the pond lilies; they have begun to open. Take Dick out in the boat and let him get you some. There is nothing prettier, except a rose," he said, and then, with a return of his oldtime gallantry, adding, "And my daughter." Her handkerchief slipped to the floor.

"Never mind, Jerry," she said to the old waiter, and bent to reach it herself. "I think," she replied, "I won't go there; I do not feel equal to the glare of sunlight on the water, and Mr. Marbeau is to go back soon—did I so understand?"

"Yes; can't stay but a few moments."

She went with him into the flower garden only, and busied herself idly plucking roses as he told her of the will he was drawing.

"Can you keep a secret?" he said, with sudden confidence, won over by her new and charming mood.

"Can I?" she smiled, looking up archly from her task, "when there is a necessity for it, yes!"

"There is a necessity for it," he said, "but you have a

right to know. Uncle Charles, I think, desires it. With the exception of a few bequests, Uncle Charles wills the bulk of his fortune to you for life, to revert to your oldest living child upon your death."

"Ah!" The sudden change in her manner, the half-suppressed exclamation, the peculiar expression that overspread her face, startled and puzzled him. An instant later she was smiling again.

"I was not expecting that," she said; "I can scarcely believe it."

"It is true, nevertheless. I congratulate you, my dear." She had stooped to reach a blossom growing low upon the bush, and at his words glanced upward with a smile. Behind and above him were the windows of her room, and a man's face looked down upon them. A deathly pallor overspread her own. Her husband caught her arm.

"You are ill!" he exclaimed, with alarm. "There, let me help you to the house." He placed his arm about her waist, but with a sudden energy she cast it off and looked upon him with an expression that he never forgot. Amazed, he could only glare at her in return. She laughed and led the way back.

"Men are so silly!" she said. The appropriateness of this comment did not strike him; but sudden transitions of moods were common to her. He accompanied her as far as the library, and she stood by the center table filling a vase with flowers while he exchanged a few words with the colonel. Coming to her side he said:

"Will you not give me a rose?"

"Why, yes;" she withdrew her hands, not looking up; "take your choice." He chose a yellow one, hesitated a moment and placed it in his button-hole.

"Papa, shall I give you a rose?" she inquired, going toward the other.

"Yes, indeed, daughter." She pinned a pink bud upon his lapel.

"Is it not beautiful?" she asked, stepping back and

turning her head from side to side to better judge of its effect.

"Yes, indeed. I wish it were blooming upon your cheeks. Come back to Ravenswood oftener, child, and the colors will return. Let her come often, Dick; it does me good, and it will do her good."

"As often as she will," said the younger man. "Good-bye! Good-bye, Lena!" She was again arranging the roses, and merely nodded to him over her shoulder. Colonel Marbeau looked upon her thoughtfully a moment and followed his nephew to the gate, where a horse was waiting. The young woman slowly ascended the stairs; the house-maid was passing below.

"Nancy, I may go to sleep. Don't disturb me. I will call when I need you." Beyond the bend, she sank again to the steps and gave way to trembling. "If he had staid ten minutes longer," she said to herself, "I would have fainted, and they might have carried me to my room!" She turned her head and listened. No sound came from above. Through the hall below floated in and upward the echoes of a horse's galloping feet. Rising quickly, she hurried noiselessly along the hallway, turned softly the latch and entered her room. Chilon was leaning against the mantel, pale and haggard. His eyes questioned her.

"Gone," she said softly. Hesitating a moment, she came to him, looked tenderly into his troubled eyes. Upon her bosom was one magnificent crimson rose; she thought a moment, and loosening its stem, placed it upon the lapel of his coat. With a brave effort at cheerfulness and a smile, she said: "You must leave me now, Chilon, but I will see you again."

"Why," he exclaimed, "how can I leave you? I would be discovered before I got outside the yard."

"What do you mean?" she said in bewilderment.

"Have you forgotten, indeed? I am a fugitive. No one but Silvy has seen me, and her cabin is my hiding place. I came into this house last night to search the

newspaper files for information that I needed. I saw you when you came to the library for your satchel, and followed you here."

She was breathless now with dismay and the sudden realization of her situation.

"Then you must stay here—in my room all day! Oh, no!—no!—Chilon!"

"Shall I go, then?" he asked bitterly.

"Oh, yes; go, go at once! Do not, if you love me, hesitate a moment."

She was wringing her hands in her excitement. Without a word more he walked across the room and placed his hand upon the knob; but in an instant she was by his side.

"No, no! What was I saying? You stay; I will go! Oh, Chilon, if you love me—you do love me, I know—pity me, spare me, Chilon; I could not stand—remember, it is not Lena alone that talks, but the mother of my child! Oh, if I should lose her, if I should lose her!" Her arms were about him now and tears were streaming down her cheek. He held her by both arms and looked down into her eyes.

"Would you stay, if it were not for her?"

"Would I?" the question burst from her. "Yes, I would stay with you, I would go with you to the end of the earth!" He kissed her forehead tenderly.

"Tell me all." He spoke sadly and with a desperate effort at manhood. "Tell me the truth. I will go then. There is now no reason why I should stay." She leaned against him in silence a moment, hiding her face.

"As well now as any time," she said, with weariness. He drew her to the chair and seated himself, she upon the stool by his side. Unconsciously they had reversed their positions of the night before; and indeed they were reversed; for this time she was to plead her cause. She took his hand in hers and held it tightly as she began.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MY HOLIEST AFFECTIONS."

"When you were gone," she said gently, "papa sent for me. I have never seen him so angry. His wound troubled him a great deal, but if it had not been for the wound I don't know what he would have done. It placed a limit upon his violence, and when it healed he was calmer. From the day he let me talk to him I begged and pleaded for our love—for you, without telling him of our marriage. I told him that you must have struck him in an outburst of passion, and then for the first time I learned of the circumstances under which he was wounded. He said emphatically that it was the one thing he did not blame you for; that if you had not resented a blow from a whip you would have been too ignoble to wear your father's name. But he would entertain no proposition looking to our reunion and declared that he would disinherit me if I attempted to join you. To this I replied that when you came for me I would go with you and if he pressed me too far I would go to search for you. If left alone I was willing to remain and wait but no one should wrong you in your absence. I think I must have inherited a good deal of the family temper, for I convinced him that I was in earnest."

"What was the real cause of his violent opposition; do you know?"

"No. But he had set his heart upon my marrying your cousin, Richard, who was the oldest and would be the head of the family. Besides, he was a lawyer, and papa's business would require a legal mind to protect it.

"Another reason papa had was that Richard was Catholic, like himself, and most of the foreign family connections, while your mother had been Protestant and you were following in her footsteps. When I was allowed to come home and to see you, Chilon, whom no one count-

ed a danger, I found love and sympathy. I loved you from the first. Oh, God! how I loved you." She bent her head upon his hand and kissed it, weeping silently. "I had no mother; the sisters had been good to me, but stern and strict. You were all, and more. With you everything I did was right, and you praised and loved me until I was blind to all except the one fact that you did love me. I would have died for you then;—I would die for you now;— ah, if I could only live for you, Chilon,— if God would only let me live for you!"—Her voice broke. She waited a moment, shaking her head mutely as the full realization of her situation came back to her.

"Then they began to try and change me. I left the house and took refuge with your sister. Oh, but if there is an angel on earth, she lives in Celeste! She was good to me. She came here to papa and they stormed and raved at each other, for—she is a Marbeau, too, and injustice maddened her. He took up the idea that she had led me off and would try and bring about our marriage; and he drove her from the house, swearing that he would never speak to her again,—his dead brother's child. And he never did." She paused a moment and reflected. "Months passed. Your letters ceased. I did not know where to write. Richard came again and again, and with a cunning that deceived me, offered his friendship. He pretended that he had detectives searching for you, and in this way he got my sympathy. I did not know what to do. Time went on,—a year—two years;—not a word came to me; and then the blow fell. They showed me the train robbery and your name. I would not, I could not believe it. I still held out for you. I was the only one. Then your cousin went on to see about you and when he came back,—God forgive him, I never will,—he told me that there had been no mistake. He brought me a message from you,—too cruel to repeat now. I know it was false,—I soon found out. They persuaded me to go to my aunt's in the city; they found out my secret marriage, they advertised for a divorce,—they hurried it

through,—and I was free. My father knew nothing of the lies told to me; he has said it, and I believe him. When Richard came back, he brought a picture of the real culprit, and it was published to vindicate the family. They never let me see that paper. I was secluded and too miserable to read or care for anything, and my aunt had taken me abroad. Somehow, they got my consent; my father was getting old; I had wronged him, disgraced the family;—they played upon my holiest affections to accomplish their base ends;—and I, still a weak girl—yielded." She was crying softly. He did not speak, but sat with his free hand gently stroking her hair.

"And then," he said, at length; "go on, I listen!"

"Months after it all came out. By accident I learned the truth, and in a frenzy charged him with his treachery. He coolly admitted it, and pleaded his love. His love! The greed and avarice of a mere money seeker! The love of a brute!"

"Be calm," said the man by her side, tightening his clasp on her hand and head. "Tell me the rest!"

"I left him and went to your sister. He came and pleaded; and then—my little girl was born,—and he threatened to take her away! I did not know that he could not have taken her, that no moral offense could be proved that unfitted me for the custody of my child. I went;—but not as his wife. From that day we separated. I have made the best of the wretched life. Papa has realized the sadness of it; he knows now what a mistake was made, and blames himself. I know it from his tenderness to me. He has asked me to come here frequently and stay with him, and I come for the day, often. Last night was the first I have spent beneath this roof since I left it years ago; and before I retired we had been talking about you. He spoke so kindly of you, it almost made me love him again;—for God forgive me, I used to think that I hated him. Oh, Chilon! If you had only let me come to you,—if you had only given me some address to write to you. A one-room house with daily work with

the needle, or even at the washtub—anything to be with you;—I would have been so happy! Look at me now; not yet thirty; no happiness in all my life but those few sweet months; no happiness in the years to come; nothing but misery, wretchedness, separation;—unless Heaven sends me release!" She poured out the broken sentences passionately and ceased from exhaustion. There was a long silence. The slow, rhythmic rise and fall of his hand upon her head continued.

"Is that all,—have you told me all?" he said gently, at length. She lifted her face and looked pitifully into his, her eyes melting with love and tenderness.

"That is all!" The voice was as the whisper of the wind in the pines. He was still again for a time.

"It is well," he said at length, calmly, "there is no child to call the convict 'father.'" Gently lifting her to her feet and supporting her whole weight, he half led, half carried her to the door.

"Shall I see you again before I go?" She steadied herself with her hand on the lintel as she stood to answer his question, her sad eyes lingering upon his.

"Yes," she said, "I will come again."

CHAPTER XV.

"LET HIM BEWARE OF RAVENSWOOD."

Twilight had fallen when, for the fourth time, Lena came with noiseless step and entered the room. He still lay where he had thrown himself, upon the bed, and still slept the sleep of exhaustion. This time she bore a tray of food and arranged it upon the table. Going to Colonel Marbeau's dressing room she secured the little alcohol lamp and silver boiler that he used for heating his shaving water and soon had a cup of tea steaming. To obtain all these things had been no easy task, but she had learned many things in her short life, and no one suspected her. When she excused herself for the night the colonel returned to his political papers in the library, the servants hurried through the few preparations after tea and the house was still again.

She stood above the sleeper a moment and gazed into his face, now relaxed and wearing something of the old boyishness that had once characterized it. It was hard to realize that so many years had passed since she had seen him lying there, her husband, the hour for their daily separation at hand. She could not count them. It was a lifetime. She thought of all that had transpired in those years, of her grief and sorrows and her fatal troubles. From these her mind turned with sudden remorse to him; lonely, wifeless, a fugitive, with no friend on earth to help him. She pressed her hand to her eyes to check the tears.

"One," she murmured, "one! until death parts us! So I promised and so it shall be!" She knelt by his side, her lips to his ear, her hand upon his brow. "Chilon! Chilon! Awake, it is I, Lena!" He opened his eyes and lay half conscious.

"Did some one speak," he said, "or was I dreaming?" His eyes traced the outlines of the room. It was not a

cell, nor was it the humble cabin that had been his home; and a hand was upon his brow.

"It is I, Lena. Wake!" He started up violently, and noted the lighted lamp.

"Lena! Lena!" he exclaimed, "have I slept so long?"

"Yes," she said, disengaging herself with gentle force, for he had caught her in his arms. "See, here is your supper! I came several times, but you were sleeping so soundly I would not waken you." She was forcing her smiles and trying to brave it out. "Be seated and let me wait upon you as I used—" She hesitated, sobbed and turned away a moment, but when he placed his arm around her with tender solicitude, she broke from him again resolutely. "Sit there, now; the tea is hot and we have not much time."

He was not hungry, but he made an effort to please her. She seated herself opposite him and ministered to his wants, glad that she could do even that little for him. Her quick mind had already noted a change in him. The wild excitement of eye and action were gone, and in its place, after the surprise of his wakening, had come a quiet that was ill suited to his situation. The boyishness no longer shone in his face; he was a man again, cool and collected, with a definite purpose in mind. He stood up at length and took her hand in both his.

"Now," he said gently, "I thank you for all your love and faith, and this last kindness to Chilon. If it so happens that we do not meet again, remember that however wrong my life has been, I have never lost sight of you, the star of my long night. I know you are loving and true; that you have been wronged more than any woman." He struggled a moment for calmness. "You are my all," he said at length, "but you must soon be to me a memory. I will love you and bless you forever." He lifted her face and pressed his lips to hers a moment. Then gently disengaging her arms, he turned away.

Oh, strange power of womanhood's intuition! She, amazed at the change in him, stood looking after his re-

treating form, then ran to him and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Chilon, promise me one thing," she said, with sudden understanding, "will you promise me?" He searched her face and read the truth.

"No! I will not promise. I have sworn the other way." She locked the door and placed her back to it.

"You must!" she said with desperate firmness. "You are innocent now. I love you and believe sometimes that all may some day be well; that faint hope is my all; but oh, Chilon;—a murderer—a murderer! I could not, I could not live through that!"

"And I cannot live through this," he said passionately, his restraint broken. "I can forgive him his cowardly sacrifice of me, of my happiness, but he has wronged you, and as God lives he shall die!"

"What!" she cried, awed and horrified. "You would assassinate him! You would curse my life with a new horror; make my child an orphan! For what? Would that right the wrong? Would that bring us together? Do you think that I could ever look into your eyes again, or touch your hand or lips? Never! The day you do such a deed, you pass from my heart, from my love, from my life, forever!" He never forgot the words and the expression of her face. Her mood changed instantly. "Oh, no, Chilon, that is impossible for you—for you! You are excited, you do not know what you are saying. Come; Lena loves you, worships you! If you do this deed you slay yourself and me!" He was dazed by this passionate outburst. He could not understand.

"You love him, then!" The words were whispered almost in awe.

"No; a thousand times, no! But I love you." He looked away, almost overcome.

"Lena, I have sworn by my holiest memories, by my mother's grave, by the love of heaven and the love I have for you! While I waited and walked this room, I pleaded with God for an opportunity! I swore that if ever I

meet Richard Marbeau I would kill him! I shall keep my oath if it sinks me into the blackest depths!" She retreated slightly, her wide open eyes full of horror. Her mind flew to another defense.

"But you did not swear to seek him. Promise me you will not go into the city! Promise me that, Chilon; I would do anything you ask of me; promise! You were going to seek him. Promise me you will not go!" He held her in his arms where she had thrown herself again.

"I promise that!" he said, slowly.

"Ah!" she said, proudly, "you need not swear it, Chilon, as you did the other. Lena does not need an oath from you!"

"I promise," he repeated, brokenly, "but God pity him if we meet! You do not need my oath; you believe me! I shall keep them all,—the pledges. I said when you gave me your girlhood that I would protect you! Misfortune, weakness, treachery destroyed my power to keep that vow, but I am free now, and I shall protect you against even your husband. The man who wronged, who betrayed and debased you cannot meet me and live!" Again his excitement overcame him. She soothed him with her arms upon his shoulders, her earnest face upturned to his.

"You will not meet—you cannot meet—and if you did, you would not kill Lena to keep a promise. Oh, no, Chilon, think no more of that!"

"Shall I never, never see you again, Lena?" he cried, in agony, now that the moment for parting was upon them. The fear of that coming crime was still overshadowing her.

"Yes," she said, eagerly. "We shall meet again, Chilon!"

"Here?"

"Here. I will dare all for you, Chilon."

"How shall I know when you are alone?" She looked about her quickly.

"The lamp at that window will mean it is safe; at the

other, it will mean danger. But, oh, Chilon, you would not, you could not break your promise to me! Anywhere, come anywhere, but not to the city!"

"I shall not break it," he said. "I will not enter there while Richard lives. But let him beware of Ravenswood!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"I KNOW WHERE TO FIND IT."

He tore himself from her arms and made his way out through his old room. Descending the tree he passed swiftly toward the swamp and soon found the cabin. The old woman arose as he entered. With one glance at his changed appearance she shook her head.

Age and her calling had brought to Silvy great skill and judgment in forming correct conclusions. This man had been dead for years to the family. He had returned in the night as a fugitive. The great Marbeau house a mile away, was open, its owner still there and the nephew's room was probably as he had left it; but he had come to her cabin, a negro's cabin, for refuge. He had come burning with the memory of a great injustice. Now, shaved and dressed and in appearance again himself, he returned once more. And in his eye was a new light.

She shook her head over the problem and offered him food. He turned from it.

"I have eaten," he said simply.

There was an urgent call from the outside and she went forth. A woman desperately ill needed medicine and she returned and procured it. Placing it in the visitor's hand, she said:

"In a dream to-night, Silvy saw company at the big house. Her eyes are dim and couldn't find their faces. Who there?" The negro visitor shrunk back slightly.

"Young Miss come back; and Marse Dick."

She waved her hand and went in. Chilon was sitting lost in thought over the scenes from which he had returned and she forebore to disturb him. But when he rose to seek his couch, he found her standing and regarding him, her strange, wild eyes now flashing with some of their oldtime fire.

"You seen her?" she said, simply.

"Who?" Her face took on its look of cunning.

"An' you seen him!" He was amazed beyond expression. "He would kill you," she said. "The snake in the weeds ain't as bad!"

"Whom are you talking about, mammy?"

"I am talkin' bout him; de man what steal your wife while you gone! He would kill you."

"We shall see!" he said, roused again to sudden fury. "We shall see!" She took from the crevice in the chimney her long, keen knife and offered it to him. He shuddered at sight of it in her claw-like fingers and shook his head.

"Put it back," he said, "I know where to find it." And then, noting her excitement: "You evidently do not love the man?"

She reached her hand over her shoulder and touched the hidden wound.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Did he strike the blow?"

But she had gone to her couch. Presently she began her queer chant, her voice at times rising to a pitch of excitement that made his flesh creep. So sang the wild savage, he had heard, when war was at hand.

This passed. Over him came the shadow of his great misfortune. Lena was lost to him forever. Nothing could alter, could lessen that fact. He arose and plunged out into the night, to come at dawn and sink exhausted upon his couch again.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE LOVE AND SORROW MEET.

Chilon could scarcely restrain his impatience when at noon he opened his eyes again. The hours wore away slowly, tediously. There was nothing to divert his mind; the song of the mocking bird outside, the chatter of noisy jays in the water oaks and the pert challenge of the squirrel had no power to amuse him. From over the hill came the sweet melody of negroes at work in the fields, but the hymn once so familiar was harsh and hateful now. His mind, depressed at one moment over its tragedy, the next exulted over the realization that, after all, one being in the world still loved and trusted him, was incapable of outside impressions. Thought is the finest voice in nature, and that mind must be at rest when the chatter of her many children fall sweetly within it.

He saw the slow sun descend from the zenith, the shadows grow long upon the hillside, and fireflies begin to twinkle in the darkening swamp. Then came the blackness of night and with it freedom. He did not wait for midnight. He found a position from which he could view the house, and waited hour after hour. He saw Lena in fancy with his uncle in the library, talking over the events of the past, and plans for the future. Perhaps in those moments of confidence they again spoke of him,—of him, the fugitive hiding in the dark, waiting with hungry heart for his brief hours of happiness.

It came at last; his star arose in the night and shone with resplendent beauty above him. With a glad cry he sprung forward, swung himself up through the cedar to the roof and passed into the house. The hallway was dark, but he knew every inch of the way. His hand found the door, closed, but not latched, and in a moment more he was inside. She came to him quickly and his arms encircled her. The hour was too sacred for words. He led

her to a chair, and seating himself at her knee heard over and over again the pledge, "I love you only." With loverlike persistency he made her swear it with lifted hand, and looking into her brown eyes, frank with truth and limpid with tenderness, he believed her and was happy. But ever and anon some word of her city life would slip in, bringing with it a tumult of unavailing regrets, of jealous fears and fierce anger moving him to such extremes that she feared his self-control would be lost. Never then, nor afterwards, could he endure from her any reference to her husband, however remote; and if she spoke of any duty to be performed at home it filled him with anguish. After one of these outbursts he exclaimed passionately:

"You are a woman, gentle, refined and loving; but you despise the man you have married. It is your duty to tell him so and return to your father's home. You owe it to yourself. God has given you a nature, a soul, a life to be preserved, to be kept fresh and sweet; you brutalize it when you submit yourself to that creature. The day will come, when cold and hard, and insensible to the finer feelings of life, you will wake to the realization that the best part of you is already dead. Is the girl I loved dead indeed?" And she would calm him with a gentle touch that was irresistible.

"No," she said softly, "she is not dead, Chilon. She lives and loves you; and she loves her child." She shook her head sadly. "If it had not been for her, I would have died. If it were not for her, I would come home!"

Again, he would rise to his knees and clasping her to him with passionate force implore her to promise him, when he had made a home for them, to come back to him.

"Divorce is easy," he cried, "mere incompatibility is sufficient. It will be a week's wonder and then forgotten!" But she only shook her head sadly, drying her eyes with pathetic calmness. At length, overcome with

the strength of his pleadings, her heart stirred to sudden rebellion against fate, she said with proud vehemence:

"Yes, Chilon, I will! When you have won back your name and are free. I will come to you. I could not bring my child to less. You could not ask it! Prove to the world, to my father, that you are innocent—you are innocent and proof can be had—some way,—prove it and I will come back to you!" He could not at first reply, for the flood of feelings that came over him.

"Do you mean it?" he asked, almost in awe. "You would not deceive me in such an hour, Lena?"

"Have I ever deceived you, Chilon? No! And I never shall! My husband knows that I love your memory better than all else in life. It would not be news to him."

"But to think," he said, "in all the years to come while I search and labor, to lie awake and think of his arms about you, his lips touching yours,—I cannot! I cannot!" She bowed her head in silence.

"I cannot understand it!" he raved, pacing the floor. "I cannot understand such surrender! Men have despised the wanton woman in all ages, and none more than those of this age who take pay in carriages, and jewels and clothing—riding the streets to advertise their shame! For believe me, believe me, a woman may deceive herself, but she cannot deceive the world. The world knows when she does and when she does not love the man who supports her, and people laugh over the situation and in secret take her name in vain. I can pity and even respect the woman whose necessities drive her to ruin,—but the others! They are below even the notice of,—a convict!" He paused abashed, amazed at his own words. He knelt by her side and took her hands again. "Forgive me, forgive me," he said, "I did not know what I was saying!"

"Therefore it came honest from your heart!" she answered sadly. "Had you known, you would have spared me—spared yourself; for you should utter no reproach, Chilon; but no, I will spare you." He covered his face with his hands; she had not spared him. "You have not

told all, not all. Who is most likely in all the world to make a mistake? I think it is the girl, Chilon! Her strength is in her weakness and her weakness is her glory; because she is strongest in her power to love and weakest when she does love. And love is the glory of womanhood! Oh, Chilon, you see only the man's side. You should see twenty-four hours of the life of a woman situated as I am. You would not blame me; you would pity me, you would save me, you would not tempt me! Do you not know that I am crushing my own heart every minute; that if I yielded to my heart I would go out of this house to-night with you anywhere you might choose, to share your fate, your labor, your danger; that I would work for you by night or day; would be anything, everything, to you? That is the impulse I am fighting every minute. Help me, Chilon; help me to remember! I am the woman and you the man. You should be strong enough for both. You boast that you would protect me, you swore you would! Protect me against myself!" She was again wringing her hands. "Do not—oh, do not—I implore you—make it so hard, so hard for me!" Shame and remorse overwhelmed him for the moment.

"Here is your father's house——" he began.

"And you!' she answered, shaking her head. He looked down upon her with quick comprehension.

"You mean that you cannot come because I have returned!" She would not answer. "Then," he said sadly, "I shall help you, Lena. To-morrow I go forever."

"No! no! no! Not yet, Chilon, not yet. It has been so long; it will be so long again. Don't go yet, not yet!"

"You wish me to stay?" he cried, gladness in every feature and tone of voice.

"Yes. Because I know you will pity me. You will protect me!" And presently as he held her hands tightly: "No; it is best that you go, Chilon; it is best! But not now; wait a little while, my life, my love. Let me see your dear face again. Come to me; it must soon end.

Then you will go to clear your name and make a home for me. You will, will you not? You will leave no stone unturned to find your good name again and wear it with honor and pride."

These passionate outbursts brought for the moment exultant happiness.

But always the shadow came back. She was to return to that other man, and take up her old life; and the months, years perhaps, were to slip by. When she came back to him some day, it would be with all freshness, all sweetness gone; not the girl he had loved, but a woman of the world. The girl he had loved would have perished. Had she already perished? Would the proud, high-minded girl that dared all for him at seventeen, defied father and friends and kindred—would she, if she were living, hesitate? No! She would leave even the child itself for him.

Something of this burst from him in his agony. She shook her head.

"The girl that you loved is not dead; but she is a mother; and a mother must sacrifice everything, if necessary, for her child. Yes, if the child's future demands it, if shame were part of its inheritance, she must stand ready to sacrifice even a mother's rights and tear her heart out by the roots. Ah, Chilon, no man has ever known any woman! I am true to you when I am true to myself!"

"If you were true to yourself you would not be the wife of Richard Marbeau!"

"And I am not!" she said proudly. "You have forgotten soon! I am waiting—a sacrifice to the laws of society—the victim of civilization." He bent over her hand.

"I believe you," he said. "Forgive my words. I think that suffering has already crazed me. I take your last words as a pledge, sacred as that you gave to me in the presence of God. It makes me happy; happier than I believed I might ever again be. I shall go out to begin

my work with a light heart, fearing no failure. I cannot fail now!"

He was radiant and triumphant and she smiled wistfully to see him so happy.

"I believe that you love me," she said simply. For reply he knelt, and clasped her in his arms again and pressed his burning kisses upon her lips, her cheeks, her brow, her eyes.

Out toward the west a crown of jewels overhung the city, and silence, broken only by the rhythmic pulse in the valley and the monotone of the waterfall, enveloped the scene.

Slowly the beautiful stars of heaven sank toward the horizon. It was no new sight for them—a man and woman in the grasp of a power as strong as that which held themselves in place. And God made all!

With the morn they would pass away from view and the sun would tempt into the open again the crafty, the lying, the hypocritical, the false and vicious—serpents that bask in its heat—lives that curse life and make hope a mockery.

But the star will come again, and love is immortal. One holds the lost light of a vanished sun; the other is the light of God's own smile upon the soul, that shining once, shines on through all eternity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FATAL LETTER.

But Chilon did not go that week nor the next, nor the next thereafter. He thought to go. He said to her sadly each time that she returned to the city: "When you come again I shall say 'farewell.'" And when she came he would go to sit at her feet and tell her of his love and make her swear her faith unchanged, over and over.

And she, the woman; she could not send him away into the world; nor could she resist his appeals to come again.

For he had found a way to communicate with her. Love always finds a way! Coming back at daylight one morning from an expedition down the river, he crossed a public road and saw a postman taking letters from a little home-made box nailed to a tree. The carrier rode daily from points below and this impromptu arrangement was a mere matter of convenience to the neighborhood, it being well understood that no valuable letters would be posted at that point. He made the discovery with great delight and immediately utilized it. With his uncle's stationery and postage stamps at hand it was an easy matter.

And it was soon arranged between them that answers to his letters would be left in the cavity of a certain sycamore near the house; for it often happened that she could ride out during the day when circumstances prevented her staying over night.

Into these letters he poured his passion without restraint, addressing them to her number and street, leaving all unsigned for safety; and in her absence from the house it gave employment for his thoughts. And he could look forward to her answers.

But she came often; so often that the colonel grew almost young again in his pleasure.

"Your roses are coming back at last," he said, pat-

ing her cheek; and then they bloomed in reality. Her step grew quicker and eye brighter. Love long delayed and baffled held her in his grasp. But she wore his flowers, not his chains, and carried her head proudly.

Constant risk made Chilon careless. The heat of summer was at hand and the cabin in its low situation was exposed to mosquitoes. He suffered greatly from them. The time came when an unused room upstairs at Ravenswood was in a measure fitted up for him, and there, instead of seeking his old quarters when the hour of parting arrived, he would retreat, getting glimpses of the woman he loved during the day, and supplied with food surreptitiously. These stolen moments gave a zest to life that was new to him; and her companionship made him deliriously happy. Necessarily the care of the room fell to her also, and the knowledge of her gentle ministry and solicitude brought him still greater happiness. Gradually, from her own purse she had supplied him with all that he needed, and he no longer felt the discomforts of want.

It was a summer idyl, too beautiful to last. The end came in a way they had not dreamed. The blow fell with crushing force, and in one brief moment all of sweetness went out of life.

She had been absent from Ravenswood a week with her child, who was ill, and everything else gave place to this demand. The life Chilon was leading, exposure to the swamp air by night, irregular and often improper food and the constant mental excitement, told upon him. For a few days he resisted the encroachment of the enemy and during that time, depressed and lonely, he wrote a letter that should have gone straight to her hands and then to the flames.

It reached neither. And night after night Chilon vainly searched for her light and her letter in the old familiar places. At length he succumbed to the fever, raving in his delirium of her falseness and neglect.

Richard Marbeau's mind was fertile ground for sus-

picions. Engrossed in important court cases he had only noticed that his wife had grown younger and brighter and that in her manner toward him, even, there was a shade of cordiality not before known. He noticed also that her fondness for Ravenswood increased, and last of all, that when going to spend the night there, always she left the little girl at home. These points came to him gradually, and finally he grew suspicious. But try as he might, he could not suggest a satisfactory explanation. So many years had passed since Chilon's departure and so firmly was he, himself, fixed in his possession, he did not dream of danger in that direction. At first, remembering the will, Lena's visits had pleased him, but the suspicions came and stayed with him. Several times he had followed her out to Ravenswood and watched her closely, but to no effect. She was the same in her uncle's library as at home. And this was natural, since she had but to place the light in a certain window of her room to warn Chilon.

And she never for a moment left the man who claimed her while he was at Ravenswood.

And she always went back to the city with him, her only exhibitions of nervousness being that drive homeward.

On these occasions Chilon walked the grove outside, consumed with jealous rage.

The climax came during the little girl's convalescence. Richard had returned to the house from his office. At the door, as he entered, the postman handed him a letter. The half-familiar handwriting, the local stamp, filled him with curiosity, and his suspicions returned with renewed force. No one had seen him receive it; he placed it in his pocket. When back again within his office, he opened and read the foolish, fatal epistle, and knew that it came from Chilon.

"Why have you deserted me," it read. "Night after night I have waited and watched for you, imagining a thousand evils and distressed beyond expression. Lena, it is inconceivable that you should treat me so cruelly. I

have been tempted over and again to take my departure without waiting for you. I am haunted with the thought, always, that you no longer love Chilon; that you pity him and you cannot break all the old ties; that while with me you do love me, but when you go back to your old life you wish that this were ended and you might be left alone. Oh, Lena, why are you not frank and open with me? There is something behind it all, something that you have never told to me.

"Last night I went to your room; the light was not at the window, but I entered the house anyway, thinking that perhaps there might be some mistake. I went to your room; it was as you had left it; but its glory had departed. Oh, love, come back to me; my heart cannot stand much more. Laws and customs were made by men for their own selfish purposes; you are still my wife in the sight of heaven! Life anywhere else for you is sin, and you know it. But I shall not urge this if you will come. I shall be satisfied still to look into your dear eyes, to feel your kisses upon my lips, your hand in mine; and to know that then at least you do love me and me alone. Come back and save me from myself. I cannot endure this for many days.

"I shall look for your light Wednesday night. If I do not find it then, or a letter in the old place, God have mercy upon us all!"

Richard Marbeau had never loved his wife. He simply valued her. He was a man of strong passions, and the greatest of these were greed and ambition; a desire for wealth and political honors. From his youth he had understood that Lena Marbeau was to be his wife, and that Ravenswood, with all its traditions and loveliness and with wealth to back it, would come with her. This meant high social position; and power in business and political circles. His aspirations had already been partly realized. It was current gossip in advance of the will, an accepted fact, that Colonel Marbeau's daughter would succeed to his property; and if coming events cast their shadows be-

fore, the coming sunrise lights the east in advance. Business came to him, political patronage and a growing influence. It was accepted that he was "logically" the next Democratic congressman for his district.

But while there was no love between his wife and himself, he was nevertheless capable of intense jealousy. He knew her superiority. His honor was at stake, and loss of this meant loss of power.

And his fortune also was at stake.

He had grown cold and careless at home, secretly despising the moods of the woman bound to him by law and custom; unsympathetic, and, in his total lack of consideration, really cruel. His selfish nature, his insolent self-conceit, were totally at variance with all the characteristics that she possessed; but they had been, in a measure, his salvation. He was ignorant of the finer shades of a woman's love, and did not miss them. It had never occurred to him that a defect lay in him; his mind had never risen far enough above the petty affairs of life to become conscious that there was a broader life about him. He closed the door upon himself when he perpetrated the cruel fraud upon his cousin's wife and built his future upon a lie.

But there was another reason. The low cunning of the man showed in his actions when he had read this letter. After the first burst of astonishment and rage that the revelation brought to him, a smile overspread his face.

"So," he said, "so, my pretty, hightoned, immaculate little saint, this is the explanation! Oh, woman, woman, there is no limit to your iniquity! But I think when this matter is ended your wings will have been clipped." The thought that came to him was not one of pity; it was a joyful realization that at length he had her in his power. He knew instinctively, he realized from the letter; indeed, he had never doubted but that his wife still loved and would always love the man whom he had wronged; the man who had wronged him, he always argued, since Chi-

lon had robbed him first. The matter had not reached the irremediable condition. It should end where it was. But Lena Marbeau would be his slave from that day. Pride would bend her will, and he held the proofs. Triumph now outweighed all other feelings.

But did he hold clear proofs? He read the letter over and over. It contained only the ravings of a lover; there was no proof to convict the woman. Chilon had been her husband; he was yet her cousin. Their parting had been under peculiar circumstances, and it was natural that she should be kind to him, especially if he had come back in want. That letter was her defense, if read closely.

But suppose she kept the proposed appointment! He looked at his watch; it was yet time to catch the afternoon delivery. Taking a plain white envelope, similar to that which he had opened, he enclosed the letter, made a creditable imitation of the address and rang for his office boy to put it in a mail box.

The smile of satisfaction had not passed from his lips when the door opened and a servant brought him a large square envelope, which bore his name in the angular style of fashionable chirography. Opening it, he drew forth the inclosure and read:

Dear Dick: What has become of you? You have failed me twice and I am uneasy. What has transpired—anything that affects me? Come Wednesday night without fail. If I do not hear from you, I shall be miserable and positively frightened. Yours, BIJOU.

P. S.—I am "broke" again. Better send me a check. B.

"Always a check," he said to himself, still smiling. "Poor little schemers!" He wrote hurriedly upon a sheet of paper, tearing off the business head:

Darling: I have been overwhelmed with work. Child very sick. Ought not to have neglected you, but thought you could trust me. My checks are all gone, so I am obliged to send bills, which I hope will answer. Can't come on Wednesday night; won't be in the city. Yours truly, D.

After the messenger took his departure, the lawyer stood watching the door. A queer idea had come to him. "Suppose by any chance that letter should fall in Lena's hands?" so ran the thought. "It is different with men," he answered, and with a slight shrug of his shoulders turned to his desk.

But not to work. Only a general plan had been framed; the details were still to be worked out.

That night he found the little girl at her music in the sitting room, the wife silent and thoughtful by the window.

"Thinking of your husband, I suppose?" he said carelessly, as he busied himself about some trivial matter. She looked at him quickly, and then away.

"Yes," she said simply, "I believe that I was."

"Thanks," he called back maliciously. "I do not dare to ask what was the tenor of the thought. But perhaps," he said, pausing a moment to deliver the pun, "there was no tenor there—only the bass."

The little girl had left her playthings and had gone to stand by her mother's side. She looked toward the open door a moment, then, kissing her, resumed her play. She had felt a discord somewhere.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HEART OF LENA MARBEAU.

During her enforced stay at home, Lena had thought long and deeply upon her situation and that of the man she now knew she loved more than life itself. His condition appealed to her at all hours and she pictured him going regularly for the letter and to gaze upon her window. "He will understand," she thought. "It cannot be possible that he will doubt me now. He will know that some insurmountable obstacle has intervened and that I will come when I can. But his future!"

She knew that dissipation was a family weakness; more than one of them had filled drunkards' graves, and Chilon's ruin had sprung from drink. He possessed that peculiar nervous, excitable temperament that finds in alcohol its support. He belonged to the singular class of men who, in the hours of excitement and danger, or sudden trouble, when the heart is beating fiercely out of time and the brain whirling, crave yet more stimulant; for these consume a vital fluid and set up a new demand. With Chilon, she knew that a return to the habit, interrupted by his long confinement, meant death, perhaps family ruin. Something must be done for him. If he went out into the world upon his almost hopeless task, he would never withstand temptation. She read it in the abandonment of self-control which she had already witnessed. But what could she do? Her money was in the control of her husband; she could not get it without explanation. And if Chilon went, he must have money; she would not permit him to go impoverished and with not a friend to help him.

Her eyes filled with tears that afternoon as she sat by the window. Oh, if she could only appeal to her husband; if there were in him nobility and generosity,—but no; she could not do that. Who, then, would help her?

"My father," she murmured softly at last. "He is a man—a gentleman; he will understand. I will make him understand. He owes me something. He has spoken of Chilon kindly; I think he will be glad. And, oh, if he gives his full aid, all will be well!"

The thought made her happier than she had been in many a day.

A servant brought her a letter, and she looked to the handwriting. It was like, and yet unlike, Chilon's. What was the matter? She studied it long, after the fashion of woman, and then broke the seal. Her eyes overflowed with tears as she read the lines.

"My poor boy," she said. "How he must suffer. Sick! Oh, God, Chilon sick—alone in that cabin—no comforts —no nurse,—only that half-demented old woman! Chilon sick and calling for me."

She almost cried out in her sudden pain. But no, he says that he will come Wednesday night—day after tomorrow! He has left me a day for preparations. Yes, Chilon, I shall come! I shall come if it wrecks the life of your Lena! A woman's highest duty is to the man she loves. She must not give him up to despair! No one will stop me. Let no one dare to stop me!"

Her excitement attracted the little girl.

"What is it, mamma?" she asked; "are you ill, mamma?"

"No, my baby;—not ill! I am simply—tired!"

"Good mamma! Sweet mamma!" The little one came and put up her arms.

"Do you think so, sweetheart? Do you think mamma is good?"

"Are you not good, mamma?" The little eyes opened wide.

"I don't know; I don't know, my precious! I hope so. God alone knows! But I try to be."

She sent the child to play again. She was studying the address of the letter, and wondering if the forced style proved that Chilon was indeed ill, when she heard

her husband's step. In a moment she was herself again, the little weakness which attacks so many lonely women at twilight, gone.

Chilon must have help; her father must furnish it; but how reach him? And would Chilon be angry with her if she told his secret? Oh, for a woman's love and sympathy!

It came to her then, as a revelation, that the friend she needed now was Celeste, her sister-in-law. But she would consult Chilon first. They could trust her to give her aid and counsel without ever asking a question. The secret would be safe with her. Who, next to herself, would have his interest at heart more than his only sister?

Her plan rapidly shaped itself. She would go boldly to Ravenswood and effect a reconciliation. If she could succeed in this and get Celeste over for the night she might put her in the room that had been fixed for Chilon, and when he came, unfold the plan and get his consent. Then Celeste might be brought in, and her cool judgment would clear away the difficulties.

She ordered out her pony carriage early on Wednesday, and with injunctions of more than usual minuteness to the old nurse, who had followed her from Ravenswood, set out for the country. Her husband saw her go, a sardonic smile upon his face, and went calmly to his office.

It was a beautiful summer morning, full of the odors of pines and wild flowers, and the songs of the mocking birds. Overhead were the blue skies, with here and there a thin cloud afloat like the lost veil of a bride. Her heart beat hopefully. She had now a definite plan in mind at last, something to take hold upon, to cling unto; a new object in life. She saw in fancy the mists cleared away from Chilon's future, and he vindicated and established somewhere. She imagined his letters coming to her full of hope and love and thankfulness, and then,— some day —perhaps life might become unbearable—she and her husband might agree for once, agree to disagree; and she

would be free. Would Chilon love her then as now? Would he? Yes, she was sure of it.

The little mare skimmed the hard clay roads and the wheels sang merrily underneath. She found herself singing also, a little melody of long ago. She laughed over the discovery, she, Lena Marbeau, singing! The mare turned under a shaded avenue and soon paused at the little gate in front of the Ravenswood mansion. The glad old man came down the walk and took the young woman in his arms. In after years he thought often of that morning, the brightness of her eye and the color upon her cheeks.

"I was afraid you had deserted me, my child. I was about to send in——"

"Little Lena has been ill, papa; but she is well now. I came as soon as I could. Are you well—quite well?"

"Quite. Even an old soldier, full of wounds, must acknowledge the compliments of such a season as this and keep himself in harmony with nature. Look up and around," he said, "does it not seem that all the world should be at peace on such a day? If I have enemies I pray their mercy," he continued gaily, as he led her in.

"And if there are those to whom you are an enemy?" she said, smiling.

"I forgive them all. I want to be at peace to-day. Let us sit here upon the porch; it is too good to go inside the house. Did you bring the morning paper? Our mail doesn't come until noon, you remember."

"Yes, here it is. Papa, Uncle Francis was your favorite brother, wasn't he?"

"Yes. But what are you thinking of now?"

"Wasn't he killed at Gettysburg on just such a day as this? Do you mind telling me about it again? It has been so long since I heard it. He must have been very brave; and his picture is so good-looking."

"Just such a day," he said, sadly. Then his eye kindled as memory brought the scene. "We of Pickett's brigade lay waiting for the word to charge. All the morning we

had listened for the command, and overhead thundered the shot and shell of all our artillery, focused on the heights before us. Then our ammunition died out and our general rode to Longstreet. I learned afterwards that he said: 'General, shall I charge?'

"Longstreet, who felt in advance the coming disaster, turned away his face and was silent.

" 'Then I charge,' said Pickett, and rode away.

"I think the world must have held its breath that day. It was the crest of the war wave that had been rolling higher and higher for years, and it broke over that hill with a shock that shook the earth and sent a thrill to the heart of civilization. Amid the wreck, the drift that lay beyond the enemies' guns, was your Uncle Frank."

The old man was silent, his head bowed.

"He sent you a message, papa. Do you remember it?"

Her lips were white and trembling now.

"Yes. To Robert Aubren, now your Cousin Robert, he gave his sword as he, also wounded, came staggering by him. 'Tell Charles,' he said, 'to keep my sword and my children from dishonor.' Child, child! what would you have?"

He had caught sight of her agitated face.

"Oh, papa, this: Let us leave Chilon out, now; but Celeste! Papa, I want you to take her back to your heart; love her, let her come to you! We are so few, now, papa, and time is passing. Just say the word; there will be no scene, no explanations. She will come. What was it you said, papa dear, just now, about forgiveness and peace? Did you mean it?"

Who could resist the appeal of those eyes; that frank, loving, tender face; that voice, the incarnation of melody. Not he.

"I meant it," he said, "and I am glad that you have entrapped me. Frank's child shall come and be welcome." She threw herself into his arms and kissed him. It was so much like the olden way that he trembled with delight.

"Stay here," she said, running away from him. "I am going right over and tell her. And, papa, you do not understand me now, but some day you will think that God put it into your heart to be kind to the best woman He has let live on earth."

"I am glad now," he called to her, "that He sent the message by one of His angels."

She waved her hand to him in reply.

The little mare sped away, her pace, for the first time, stimulated by the whip.

Taking a little by-road, the young woman paused before an ancient tree and opened a note she had carried in her bosom. It read:

"Have been kept at home by Lena's illness. Will remain tonight at Ravenswood. With kisses, lovingly, L."

She thrust it into the hollow of the tree, under a stone left there, and resumed her journey. Long afterwards, passing the spot, she found it blackened and undecipherable, all except the words, "with kisses, lovingly, L.," and placed it again in her bosom.

CHAPTER XX.

LENA AT ROSE COTTAGE.

The young woman drove rapidly three miles, crossed ıe Ravenswood line and turned her mare into the well-ept road that circled among the hollies and dogwoods nd broadened before a picturesque cottage nestling ıetween two giant magnolias. Clematis climbed n and out through a great Lamarque rose that, ıeginning at the corner of the low veranda, had traveled ts whole length, letting down, among the purple discs of he vine, its clusters of white blossoms. Beds of geraniıms, scarlet and salmon, blazed under the morning sky, nd giant sunflowers, overrun with morning glories, nodled in the new-found sunlight, a mass of blue and gold. n the dark green of the magnolias shone the immense nd snowy blossoms, and, as if nature had not been prodiıal of tints and hues already, a peacock, for the moment, tartled by the new arrival, spread his wonderful feathers ınd stood on exhibition.

Into the life that had planned all this loveliness must ıave come some wonderful harmony, for beauty is never an accident.

As Lena tied her horse and entered, a little boy came out of the hallway and stood waiting for her—a slender, dark-haired little fellow, with a complexion like a nun's, and brown eyes that held a strange lambent flame. She knelt quickly and took him in her arms, pressing him again and again to her bosom. A smile overspread his face, a happy little glint of moonshine.

"Aren't you glad to see me, Chilon?" she asked, holding him at arm's length.

"Yes, Aunty," he said, "I am always glad to see you." A wistful smile lingered upon his lips as he stood watching her. She caught him to her breast again and the

eyes that closed above him closed over the gathering tears.

"See, what aunty has brought you," she said quickly,—"come to the carriage." She turned her face from him suddenly and drew him with her. The package taken from under the seat was large.

"Now, guess what it is!" Smiling down into his grave little face she held it out of reach.

"A book," he said.

"Wouldn't you wish it something else, Chilon,—marbles—a game—toys—?" He shook his head. "Nothing but books, books, books! Well, a book it is; and such a book!" They went and sat upon the steps and she took out not one but three volumes. "See, here are your friends, the flowers," she said, pitching her voice in that confidential tone so thrilling to eager little ears, "all in their own colors, with their every-day and Sunday names; and here in one, all the butterflies, beetles and lacewings, and—ugh! Look at the horrible worms! And here," she continued triumphantly, "are all the birds you love so well!—see the blue jay! Isn't he natural; and up above him is a mocking bird building her nest—"

"But she would have run the jay away!" he said, opening his eyes wide.

"She will,—as soon as she sees him!" laughed the woman, hurrying on. "And look at the wrens and blue birds, and indigo birds and swallows;—but take them! they are yours, Chilon!" He took them, dividing the burden under his arms and with a brighter face than she had seen often, put up his lips to kiss her.

"I am much obliged! You are good, Aunty."

"Do you think so, Chilon?"

"Why, yes! Aren't you good, Aunty?" His eyes opened wide and his voice grew a trifle weaker with apprehension.

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I am not!" The other scene at home flashed into memory; the little girl,

the same question. "God knows!" she murmured, and turned from him.

"And I know, Lena!" A woman was standing in the doorway smiling upon the little scene; a woman about her own height but older, a trifle stouter and with a face so radiantly pure and beautiful that the younger woman paused for an instant to gaze into it.—"We all know, dear!" A moment more and they were in each other's arms.

Lena freed herself with sudden return of the excitement that had moved her all the morning.

"Celeste, Celeste!" she cried, "such news, such good news!" her voice broke and she shook her head, the scene swimming in tears, "Papa has told me—to come and bring you—Oh, Celeste—I can't—tell you!" She threw herself into her cousin's arms; and Celeste, her own eyes grown dim, held her tightly. The little boy was looking thoughtfully upon the scene.

"Well, Lena, to bring me where, and for what?"

"To him. Don't you understand? He is willing—glad—to let all the past be forgotten between you two! He is old, Celeste, and needs you and me. I am doing my best and you must forgive and forget. Come with me, now. We won't have any scene; we'll just kiss all around and be good friends again, and——" Celeste had ceased her caresses and was looking thoughtfully upon the little boy. Her face had suddenly paled, and the pressure of a deep emotion, hardly restrained, had set her limbs trembling. "Why, Celeste! what is the matter? Are you not glad?" Lena's eyes followed the direction of the cousin's gaze and encountered the boy's. Misunderstanding her, Lena continued: "Don't let's think of that, dear! That, too, will all come right. You must go to papa; it would be cruel not to go. I have a special reason for wishing you with me to-night. You are to come and spend the night, and I have something to tell you that affects us all deeply; you must not refuse. In-

deed, if you do, the results may haunt you all your life! I have something to tell you of—"

"Chilon!" whispered the other. "You have heard from him; he is coming! Oh, Lena!" The eyes of the older woman sought her face and studied it. She saw the brightened face and rising color and marked the excited manner. For a moment she stood with drooping lids, silent and thoughtful. Again she let her gaze wander over the radiant woman before her.

"I shall come," she said. "I think it is my duty. As for the other, Uncle Charles has no warmer friend than I. He has not treated me kindly, and he misjudged me cruelly; but—he is only a man, a poor, weak man," she added, smiling again, "and men are so helplessly impractical I have long since forgiven him!"

"Why haven't you gone to him and told him so?"

"I do not think he has needed me; and I have had nothing to gain and much to lose!" For the first time Lena understood the sudden agitation that her greeting brought.

"There is no danger of that, Celeste; none while Lena lives!" The other comprehended and shook her head.

"You think so, and I hope so. Let us not be unhappy about it. I am so glad to see you. Come, Chilon, and let us go over the books with you. Aunty will want you with her while she is here!" They went into the broad, cheery sitting-room, redolent and bright with flowers and gorgeous tinted fruits, and taking his favorite position, his elbows on the floor and chin in hand, Chilon began his tour of delight. Presently, household demands called Celeste, and Lena was left with the boy. She had gone down by him, prone upon the floor, and as she turned the pages she gave half her attention to him and half to the books, smiling over his grave comments upon birds and insects and the serious expression of his young face. Her hand reached out and toyed with his brown locks, smoothing and arranging them. Watching their artistic effects against the whiteness of his brow, her own face

grew wistful and tender the while. Presently the last page was turned, the last gay picture of nature's wild children examined, and her arm drew him closer to her, his head against her breast.

"Are you a happy little boy, Chilon? Do you always feel well and happy?"

"Yes," he said, with decision. "Mamma is so good and sweet she would make anybody happy!" The eyes of the woman wore a troubled expression, and the half-smile died upon her lips.

"Wouldn't you be glad if you might come home with me, Chilon, and stay a long, long time, and have all the books and toys you wish, and visit the beautiful stores and see little children dressed so prettily;—have a pony to ride?"

"Would mamma go, too?"

"She would come often to see you;—whenever she wished to come."

"I would rather stay here," he said, with his grave, unchildlike manner. "I am afraid mamma would miss me when she wakes in the night. Don't you think she would, Aunty?" She buried her face suddenly in the folds of her sleeve and was silent. He wondered at this emotion, too deep for his mind, but he saw that he had in some way distressed her, and was silent. Gently her hand returned to its rhythmic stroke upon his head. The silence, the nooning summer day, the soft, sympathetic touch overcame him. He slept and lay upon her breast.

Lena looked up to find Celeste standing in the doorway gazing down upon her with an expression so singular that for the moment she thought something serious had occurred; but the next instant the well-known smile came back, the face grew radiant, and crossing the room she drew the curtain to bar a ray of sunshine that, creeping upon the little boy's brown hair, must soon have troubled his eyes. Then she passed out.

And so the last hour of morning wore away and high

noon came with its return of life from the fields. The little boy opened his eyes.

"Mamma," he whispered. A whisper came back from the breast upon which he lay.

"Yes, dear, I am here!" He lifted his head and looked upon her with recognition.

"I thought you were mamma, Aunty," he said. And in the woman's eyes two crystal drops were shining

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRAGEDY AT RAVENSWOOD.

:leste came to Ravenswood that summer night and
·ed the library before any one knew of her arrival.
ı quiet dignity she approached her uncle as he arose
iedly, placed her arms about him, and kissed him
ı the lips. He could find no words to express him-
other than—
Velcome, my child; welcome!"
Vhy, I know that, Uncle Charles, without your try-
to tell me. And, indeed, do you know, I am glad
ɔme;—to see you looking so well again. And Lena,
!"—turning to her cousin—"how nice it is to have
in the old home! It makes me feel young again!"
ıe led them away from their thoughts skilfully, and
of what they were doing at Rose Cottage, of the
:hes that were immense and bringing good prices,
he watermelons, worth a small fortune, and of the
on whitening in the fields. For sturdy Robert Au-
ı was a good farmer and attended to his business.
radually all restraint passed away under the match-
charm of the two women and their loving devo-
. The colonel found himself aroused and happier
ı he had ever expected to be again. They opened
organ and sung for him some of the old-time melo-
he loved so well, suggestive of the days before the
—"Suwanee River," "Massa's in the Cold, Cold
und," and "Nelly Bly." Then came the southern
ier's favorites, "Girl I Left Behind Me," and "Dixie."
a page in the old music book held "Lorena," and
:n the colonel's eye caught sight of it he was full of
ıusiasm.
It brings back the campfires and those Virginia
hts so vividly. There was in camp a young fellow
ɔ would stand up in the firelight every night and

close the singing with that song. Poor boy, he died alone in prison. Sing it, girls; let me hear it once again."

Celeste was playing the accompaniment and she began the simple ballad, so pathetic in its sentiment—

The years glide slowly by, Lorena,
Since last I held thy hand in mine.

The once powerful voice of the old soldier rang out strongly again, sometimes drowning both Celeste's voice and accompaniment. He did not notice that Lena was not singing, nor that she had drawn back into the shadow and was trying desperately to check her emotion. Celeste did, and realized their mistake. The best possible course, then, was to complete it, and give Lena time to compose herself. This she succeeded in with difficulty. Scarce would she conquer her tears and draw back silently to the instrument before some line that seemed to have been planned for her would ring out and start her grief anew.

"Thank you, girls!" exclaimed the old man, fervently; "it has done me so much good. War is a terrible thing, but it wakes a nation's heart. And I sometimes think, if we could have our loved ones back from the battlefields and burial grounds, we could spare all the treasure lost and call the price a small one. And even grief brings us something. We are better people when we have suffered, even if we never forget."

This was a new vein for the old soldier. Lena had glided from the room at the close of this sentence, and when she came again no trace of her conflict remained.

So passed the evening. Celeste had kept up her chess with her grandfather at Rose Cottage and now challenged her uncle for a game. He accepted, and was beaten over and over, much to his surprise.

"My child, I used to beat you without effort!" he cried, nonplussed. "Have I, indeed, fallen off so in my game?"

"Oh, no! Your game is the same, Uncle, but mine is not. Try again! I am going to experiment with a new gambit and give you a chance. There, I will open with the King's Knight's pawn. Now I am weak until the fourth move, and you have your opportunity!"

He saw it and won, much to his delight.

Eight, nine, ten;—the evening was ended. Flushed and excited, Lena stood waiting. Good-nights were said, and resuming his paper for an hour's reading, the colonel let them go.

A summer storm was brewing, foretold by gusts of wind and the rumble of distant thunder.

The two women went to the room prepared for Celeste, and whispered their plans, while steadily in her window burned Lena's lamp. They did not hear a man's quick step upon the porch, his entrance into the library; but Richard Marbeau arrived and gave a business excuse. For some time the men sat and talked, and then the younger saw the elder to his room and extinguished the lamp in the library.

The house was now dark and quiet; only the ticking of the clock on the stairs and the slight tapping of a chinaberry limb against a distant shutter broke the silence.

No one ever knew Richard Marbeau's full intention that night. He passed noiselessly upstairs along the hall, and placed his hand upon the knob of his wife's door. It turned and the latch yielded. Opening the door quickly he stepped inside, closed it and stood with his back against it, looking eagerly about him. Lena had returned, and at sound of his entrance had arisen, a glad smile upon her face. When she recognized him and noted his quick, searching glance about the room, her heart gave one great throb, and she reeled in her tracks. Her first words were, to the visitor, a confession:

"Is it you?" she gasped, one hand clasping her breast, the other a chair.

This, the deathly pallor, the agitation and staring eyes were enough. He was merciless.

"Yes, it is I! Whom did you expect?" he asked sarcastically. She threw her hands to her temples.

"Go back! Go back!" she cried. "For God's sake! —you don't know what you do! Go back before it is too late!"

She was frantic now.

"Let me go!" she cried, as he resisted her efforts to move him from his position, "let me go and you stay! Give me the key quick before it is too late!"

He seized her by the shoulders and with brutal force hurled her headlong across the room. Stunned and bruised, she struggled to her feet only to see him draw the key from the lock, step outside, replace it and close the door. Then the bolt slid. She flew to the knob and seized it; the door was locked beyond doubt. She thought of the transom; a chair might enable her to reach it and plunge through; and she would have tried desperately, but at that moment she saw the lamp. With one bound she reached it and rushed with it to the other window. A cry of triumph burst from her and she sank upon her knees, sending up thanks to heaven for her deliverance. Richard was safe now. If Chilon came he would see the danger signal and keep away; he would not enter and ruin his life and hers. Would it not be better to extinguish the lamp altogether. Yes! But no! He came once when the light was out; he had said so in his note, and might come again. Yet she had written that she would remain; and he might not notice the position of the lamp. She turned down the flame and blew it out. The man in the hall saw the light through the transom die out and smiled; and still he waited, while inside the woman peered from the window trying to fathom the shadow with her straining eyes. The lightning was now incessant and the thunder deafening. Minutes passed. Would he never come inside, the man in the hall waiting so patiently for—he knew

not what? Would the night drag its horror over her until dawn came? What was that? A footfall? Ha! a struggle in the hall. A shriek burst from her:

"Merciful Heaven, he has come! Chilon! Chilon! Stop, for my sake, for Lena's sake! Chilon, wait! I will explain it all! Don't strike him, Chilon, don't strike!"

She seized the door knob in her frantic terror and screamed to her father for help. Her cries rang out from the room like the cries of maamen in padded cells. They were followed by the sharp report of a pistol, a strange, fearful cry, and the fall of a body. A vivid flash of lightning and a thunder-burst seemed to swallow up both sounds. But light shone in the hallway and Celeste's voice was heard in one heart-rending appeal. Then the light seemed to flicker, that came through the transom, and went out, and all was still and dark, except when the electric fluid tore the night and the retreating thunder echoed from the hills. Gasping now with terror, unable to utter a sound, she leaned against the door. Faintly she seemed to hear her father's hurried step. He tried the door, then unlocked it and rushed in, candle in hand. She was unable to retain her balance, and fell heavily to the floor.

"Where is Richard—where is your husband?" he asked excitedly, lifting her to her feet.

Slowly and fearfully she pointed toward the hall.

"Dead!" she whispered. She turned and sank by the bed, burying her face in the cover. He passed rapidly into the hall. Celeste lay in a dead faint near her door, the extinguished candle by her hand. He touched her cold face upon which the wind was blowing. Shading his candle he advanced to the open door of the corner room and entered. Familiar with death as he had been, the sight that met his eyes froze the blood in his veins. Lying upon his back, his ghastly eyes widely opened, was Richard, bathed in blood that seemed creeping everywhere. The whole story was written there. A long,

keen knife lay on the floor, the dead hand still clasped a pistol and bloody tracks led to an open window.

For a moment Colonel Marbeau stood in silence looking into the mute face and reading the signs about him. The man had heard a sound, had come from his room into the dark, had fired and, following the intruder too closely, they had come together in the little room. The knife had done its deadly work.

The old man's features worked convulsively; there had been no great love between them, but Richard was Lena's husband! He closed the door, and went back, with Celeste in his arms, to the bedroom, where he soon succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. Lena still knelt motionless by the bed, her form shaken by dry, soundless sobs.

"Lena," he said, "rise, my child, and calm yourself. I will go and send Nancy to you. It is a terrible night; a terrible ending of a happy night. I wish I could comfort you—" His voice gave way.

"Papa! Papa!—" The girl's eyes questioned him in anguish.

"It is true!" he said. "He died—like a Marbeau should, in defense of his wife and home!"

Celeste stood leaning against the mantel, silent, her face as white as the marble itself. They looked into each other's eyes, and came together in each other's arms. The face of the older woman did not change expression.

"Chilon may come. We must be careful," she said. Lena started.

"Chilon," she cried. "Have you not seen him?"

"I saw a tramp!" said Celeste proudly. "Chilon has not been here yet." Lena looked upon her a moment and dropping to her knees seized and kissed the hand of her cousin. The words burst from her:

"Good Celeste, true-hearted, noble Celeste! I thank you! I thank you!" But when with trembling fingers she relit her lamp she did not place it before either window.

CHAPTER XXII.

BACK FROM THE GRAVE.

Chilon lay watching the little flame which, summer and winter, flickered upon Silvy's hearth. In after years he could recall every detail of the scene, so strongly sometimes do little things stick in memory. There was the white ash, still holding the shape of the wood that had vanished; there were the half-concealed coals with the blue smoke curling above and underneath, the little flame thrusting above outward and upward and drawing back its tongue, the tongue of a serpent, it seemed to him. He made no effort to think. It did not seem strange to him that he should be there in bed in the day time without inclination to move; without curiosity or desire to talk. He had been very tired and rest was delicious. He saw old Silvy kneel between him and the blaze and begin to scratch the sand from around two hearth bricks, and presently her claw-like fingers lift one from its bed. There was nothing strange in that; it seemed perfectly natural that Silvy should be down there tearing up her hearth. He saw her, without even a moment of surprise, draw from the cavity an old stocking and empty a collection of coins and bills into her lap, and lift her head to listen for footsteps. If Silvy had done this in his presence every day her action now could not have been less remarkable. He even dozed off again for a few minutes while she was thus busy.

But when he awoke he began to ask himself if he should get up. He had an engagement after dark; perhaps the sun was descending. He was sure that he had an engagement; but where? He was to go to his uncle's house and meet Lena; he had promised. A doubt flashed into his mind. Had he promised? Was it all a dream, those meetings, the memory of which was rising, slowly, within him? He had come to Silvy's cabin

from up the river; he was tired and exhausted. He had slept, oh, so long, and so hard, and the sleep had been full of visions. Lena had been with him in their old room. She had let him take her in his arms and kiss her and tell her that he loved her, over and over. It was a beautiful dream; and she was to have met him on Wednesday night. He had waked too soon.

His gaze concentrated upon a man's clothing hanging against the wall. That was not the suit that he had worn when he was a fugitive. In his dream Lena had gotten it for him, just that particular suit of dark gray, the shade that she loved to well in the long ago time before he went away. Yes, that was the suit; and how could the dream vanish, leaving such a matter of fact feature upon the cabin wall? Was it a dream?

A feeble rush of blood responded to the thrill which the doubt awoke; feeble, but sufficient to vitalize the brain again and to lift the veil. All flashed before him then; the experiences of the last few weeks. It was not a dream. He had been with her, touched her hand and felt her kisses upon his lips; and she was to come on Wednesday night! It was time that he should rise and dress.

For once the brain gave command and there was mutiny in all the little army of nerves that waited upon him. Not one moved. He felt then, for the first time, that he was held down by some strange, resistless power; not a weight, but an attraction stronger than himself. He knew that health was measurable by one's ability to resist the law of gravitation and that death marks the point of total disability. What had happened? Where were his arms and legs and hands?

"Mammy!" He called to the old woman, but his voice died in his throat; it did not amount to an infant's wail. In desperation now, he tried again and must have succeeded, for she turned her head and looked toward him. But he was then too sleepy, too tired to talk; and when his eyes opened again night had descended.

Thus came back the world to Chilon. He soon found out the trouble with his limbs and voice. Swamp fever had carried him to the brink of the grave and five weeks had watched the efforts of the grim spectre to bury him there. When he became conscious of these facts his mental troubles began. Lena! Why had not she come to him? Why this cruel neglect? He, Chilon, the man she loved, the only man she had ever loved, sick almost unto death in this lonely cabin; and never a word, a visit! She could have come, he reasoned. She knew the way in days gone by and Silvy was her friend. She could have found excuse and have come. He would have gone to her. Five weeks! It was an eternity.

And then he remembered the days that had passed before his illness—long days and nights of mental anguish, in which he had waited and watched for her in vain. She had not answered his note; she had not come. He had written her at last that if she did not come on Wednesday night—what? He could not remember; but it seemed to him that something terrible was to have occurred if she failed him then. Perhaps she came. Perhaps she waited and watched for him all the lonely night. He questioned the old woman. She laughed softly, and, touching his head, told him to sleep; and he slept. He could not resist the pressure of those gray eyes upon his lids.

Then, gradually, out of the mists that overhung him, he saw figures rise and felt himself the actor in a drama so wild, so weird and awful that he could scarcely endure to contemplate it. Hour after hour it came to him, one detail upon another, with gaps here and there, but forming always a consistent history. He remembered tossing on that pallet hot with fever, calling for Lena one moment and water the next, blessing her, cursing, praying to her through miserable hours, the aged black weaving in and out of his visions like some fantastic, human shuttle, tossed by a gigantic hand. Again she would come and stand above him, waving to and fro, holding

him spellbound with her eyes. In her hand she bore an awful black drink from which he shrunk, pleading against, rejecting it, writhing in the agony of his utter antipathy; but always accepting at last. Then, as he drank, her face no longer wore its imbecile grin. With head erect and tread timed to the music of his pulse, she sang her wild melodies.

Revenge, hatred, triumph blended in that fateful song. And whenever he was about to escape from these, when he had planned to rush into the cool, dark, silent swamp, she would come and bend over him, holding him, commanding him with her eyes, against which he could not prevail, and forcing again the black, bitter, acrid juice between his teeth. All other horrors were swallowed up in this one; it was not a woman who reigned there; it was a demon that had stolen her form, and now held him in his power.

And this happened; the fiend waved its arms above him and visions came; he saw Richard Marbeau seize upon and carry off his wife; he heard her calling to him for help with hands reaching madly to touch his. He saw his enemy's arms about her, his lips to hers and then a frightful struggle. The woman-fiend danced before his eyes and sang her songs of war. She seized the long knife from the chimney and handed it to him; "Go and save her!" she said; "go and avenge the blow!" She had torn open her dress, and there, upon the shoulder, was the open wound, its lips moving in dumb agony like a thing of life at sight of death—lips that prayed to him for revenge; that twisted themselves in sinuous lines and smiled and laughed, cursed and uttered blasphemies. She lifted him and pushed him from the door, and he went away from those awful lips obedient to her will. As he slipped forth into the night one great hissing, scorching, blinding flame from hell flashed behind him and exploded in the swamp, leaving of all the myriad things of life—no living thing. In that awful light, as he looked back, he saw her transformed; no

woman was there, but a being resplendent with awful glories, the incarnation of fearful majesty, pointing lottily the way. He fled, the lightning keeping him company, hollowing out the wall of night ahead and dripping like molten gold from the naked blade within his hand. But he fled not away from her! for the awful form of the old woman was there, slipping by him in the dark woods, crawling like an animal of the night along the roadside, clinging like a shadow to his heels. Afar off, moving light crossed his vision. He knew then, that he did not dream, for these were the lights of Ravenswood. He thought no more of concealment; he came bounding with the storm like a panther; he came in a whirlwind of debris and stormdrift, and, knife between his teeth, he scaled the lashing tree and plunged headlong into a room. A man's hand was upon him; they fell, and when he arose the lightning trembled over all. He saw a woman that looked like Celeste reel back into the shadowy hall. There at his feet, with staring eyes fixed upon him, lay Richard Marbeau. Oh, the horror, the agony, the piteous pleading of the still, white face; those fixed, sad eyes! One instant only the scene shone there; the flash expired and deafening thunder came. He reached the cabin, but how he could not remember. The old woman was there, her song grown wilder as she wiped the blood from his hands, feet and clothing. She had asked him no questions; there was no need. She had slipped back her dress from the shoulder; the wound was gone. In its place was a smiling scar.

Was it all a dream—a fever vision? He looked to the chimney for the knife. It had vanished.

"Come! Come!" he argued with himself after this, smiling over his terror; "you will never get well if you excite yourself in such a manner! All fever patients have dreams and yours are no worse than others. A little brain cell took impressions of your resolution to kill Richard if you met—words spoken in rage and sworn to.

Under the influence of fever or the medicine you have been taking, the little cell has exposed its picture and all its connections have run themselves out into story form. Sleep! Dreams go by opposites."

And he slept! But he could not rid himself of the conviction that Silvy was a changed woman.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHILON'S DESPAIR.

So his mind passed again to Lena, forking over the old mass of thought and still seeking an explanation. Perhaps she, too, had been sick! Oh, yes, that was it. Lena was sick, and this being true, she could not possibly communicate with him without discovery.

And they would not let her read his notes. The thought alarmed, but made him happier.

Days passed. From somewhere old Silvy was procuring delicacies that assisted his convalescence. He was soon able to walk about and the exercise did him good. The time came when he could utilize the mails again and he wrote to Lena a few lines, doubting that they would reach her, but asking her to communicate with him in some way. There was no answer; and no light shone in the Ravenswood windows. Then he wrote again that he had been desperately ill for weeks and needed her. Would she not come to him? He took this note to the city after dark, in his desperation, and sent it by a boy to her number. The boy came and said there was no answer. Dumfounded and griefstricken, he returned to the cabin. That night he sought to enter the mansion, thinking to read the papers for information. If anything serious had happened, if even the family had gone away from the city, it would be recorded in the press. But the window by which he had entered was nailed up. The house seemed vacant.

Chilon could arrive at but one conclusion then. His return had been discovered. Richard had succeeded, and he would never see Lena again. There had been explanations; perhaps an agreement that was necessary for her and fatal to him. Perhaps she had thrown him over. In his despair this seemed most likely. The dream had been dismissed as a mere fever fugue.

After this last disappointment, Chilon fell into a melancholy that amounted almost to complete despair. He could neither eat with appetite nor sleep with comfort. Always there lay upon his mind a weight that seemed to crush every instinct of manhood, every ambition and resolution. The end had come. The years of waiting, a few weeks of delirious happiness, mixed with wild and ungovernable fears, jealousies, longings, and regrets, and now the end! He wished that he understood better the feminine mind. How could this woman—loving him—have left him so heartlessly? Did she love him? Or was his influence a species of fascination, a mild hypnotism that ended with separation? He reviewed his early experience with her; there had, even in the old days, been something he could never fathom in her character, a restless, unsettled, unsatisfied element. But that was natural under the circumstances. He tried to reason out the mood which now governed her. "She has a child," he said, "and will sacrifice herself and me, if necessary, for it. I am, I can be, nothing to her, and every moment here with me is perilous. Heroic measures must be adopted. She will crush my very desire to see her. I must go away and leave her to her fate and let her take up the old life again."

And then he would rebel against this cold-blooded worldliness: "To be choked off, shaken off like an importunate beggar; to be left with no comforting word, no message of hope and sympathy! Oh, it was cruel, cruel, heartless and cruel! The Lena of long ago would not have done so unkind, so cruel an act! She was dead, the little Lena that loved him—dead! The woman who remained was simply a—but no! He would coin no epithet; the woman was still dear to him. He drew out her picture, the miniature, and looked upon it; the sweet face and loving eyes made his heart ache! They would make it ache in all the long years to come, and unless he intended to yield to fate and die by his own hand, he must part from it.

But there was a stimulus to action that, dormant all these days, awoke his manhood at last. Revenge! If he should lie down and die two men in the world, two men who had wronged him fatally, would be happy. Carl Garner and Richard Marbeau! He would not yield until he met them face to face and had his revenge; and have it he would, even should it lead him to the gallows, or back to a felon's cell. A man who does not value his life makes a dangerous enemy!

The time had come for him to depart, and he began to make preparations. He had no money, nor friends, but the world was wide and work plentiful. At the mouth of his river lay vessels, some of which were usually short-handed. He would go, leaving his old life finished, closed up; the woman he had loved and who had proven herself narrow and scheming would be nothing to him. She had been everything to him once, but scarcely was he out of the way before another man won her, body and soul. He laughed bitterly to think how cheap was all that he had staked his happiness upon. He drew out the picture and gazed upon it for the last time, and then he wrote a dozen notes, carrying them in his pockets and reading them over and over, always to be destroyed in the end. He would not reproach or wound her. He would pass out of her life the same Chilon that entered it, incapable of deliberately inflicting pain upon her. Whatever she might be, there were excuses; but as for him, he would carry with him through life the memory of a last act of gentleness to her. So he wrote at length:

"In your silence I read all and more than you would wish, and to-day I leave you forever. This little picture would keep me from meeting the issue as a man should, and so I have decided to ask you to put it aside for little Lena. It is the only picture of my Lena in existence, and some day when the little girl is grown and is told that Chilon Marbeau once loved her mother, she may look upon it and find the justification. In the back

of the medallion are the violets you gave to me at Ravenswood ten years ago. Let them remain there, buried with the girl who, while she lived, loved no one else on earth as she did me, and whom I loved, love, and will love better than life always.

"You and I may never meet again. I do not think that we will, and this is the last message that will ever pass between us. Remember always that I am your friend, and I will try to forget that your last act toward me was unkind, contemptuous, at a time when I needed, above all things, a loving word from you.

"C. M."

On the morrow he would go. The hour was almost at hand. He placed his little package in the mail box and returned. He thought sadly of the future; it held nothing for him. If only he had one friend in the outer world to whom he could go! If the gentle mother who left him in childhood were there! Her sweet face came back to him often and very clearly upon his last day. She was buried in the little cemetery above the city where green slopes ran down into the waters, and a white monument stood over her, recording her virtues and those of her soldier husband asleep among the Pennsylvania hills in an unknown grave. Dear little mother! His heart grew tender as he thought over the old ties. Then came an impulse to visit her grave and lay an orphan's tribute there. It should be the last act of his old life.

Careless now of discovery, he went into the swamp and gathered wild flowers, terrestrial orchids, azaleas, lilies, amaryllis and holly, and when twilight came piled them in his boat. The moon rose over the horizon as he reached the river and silvered his upward path. In the frozen splendor of that streaming way, he seemed to be journeying back into childhood, where his mother awaited him. The idea was so sweet, so novel that he lifted his face, bright with the first smile it had known in many a year. From the banks where the shadows had withdrawn, whippoorwills were calling to each other, and

sleepless Orpheus of the southern glades, him of the gray-barred wings, was pouring invisible pearls into the lap of the night. The pyramid of flowers upon the craft's low bow, all beaded with the diamonds of the dew, their fragrance shed, as dreamily the brooding boatman found the way; and steering up the perfumed currents of the air the sphinx moths came on ghostly wings and kissed them even there!

Noiselessly the little boat touched land beside the wharfless city of the dead, and Chilon saw his mother's tomb rise white before him. With moist eyes, he stood there and with loving care discharged his mission. He closed his eyes and let memory bring back her face again. Again he caught from the far-away time upon the broken lyre of his heart her cradle songs and lullabies; and then arose that chill and lonely day when, smiling in the face of death, they bore her away. He was older as he stood there than she had been; but he remembered with the heart of a boy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FLIGHT.

He had turned to depart, his silent farewells said, when his attention was attracted by a stately shaft of marble in the adjoining plat. It was the burial place of one of his uncles, and no such shaft was there when last he visited the spot. He approached it with curiosity, and then observed that the soil at his feet was not grass-grown as elsewhere. In the dim light he could not easily have read the inscription, but with the aid of his forefinger he traced upon the shaft the words:

RICHARD MARBEAU.
Died
August 20, 1890.

Richard dead! The cause of Lena's absence was plain.

For a moment only as he stood he felt rush over him a thrill, a pulse of joy. Fate had smoothed the way. The next, ashamed, he withdrew his hand.

And then he saw her, the woman, in receipt of his package! It was a sad mistake. It was too late. He sat upon the coping and condemned himself. It had been a cruel act; she was in distress and he had inflicted pain upon her. Richard Marbeau dead! The man had wronged him cruelly, but—he was dead! and Lena was free. In this one fact died all animosity—all hatred. Free! The future was bright. A wild, delirious joy filled him. He arose again, remorseful that at such a time, in such a place, he should be rejoicing. He would leave it with a clear conscience. He would do a generous act to prove himself a man. He stood over the lonely grave with bowed head and whispered there: "Richard, you wronged me; but I do not bear you any

malice now. In my heart of hearts I have forgiven you as I hope God will forgive me. And if He so wills that I shall find my wife again, I will be a father to your child."

He fancied then that gazing down into the grave he would see the still white face open its eyes and look up to him. They were indeed open; he could see them, but what a strange expression upon that face—within those eyes! Frozen horror! And there was blood all about him, and blood upon Chilon's hands! The dream had returned. With a cry of anguish and fear that filled the dread spot with echoes that returned to mock him from all sides, he rushed down the slope and threw himself into the boat. He crouched there, wet with cold perspiration, while the current, seizing it, drew it swiftly away. But ever as he went voices came and the dead man's eyes followed him with their stare.

Chilon was aroused by his boat colliding with a pier. The little accident helped him to recover his calmness. He held his boat there in the shadow and thought upon the situation. Was he losing his mind? He, Chilon Marbeau, who counted himself a man, frightened by a fever phantom—an hallucination of the sick room! He tried to smile, to laugh it off; but that stony stare clung to memory! He could not rid himself of it. A desperate desire seized upon him; he would go to Lena and hear from her lips his dismissal; would say farewell, if need be. He would settle with himself and her for once and for all time. It was right and just. He owed it to both. He would not sneak back into that world which awaited him, misjudged and unblessed. He was a man, after all!

He acted upon this idea. He found the number of her house and rang the bell. A caretaker came, and, seeing him, drew back in sudden fright; but he answered the hurried questions. Mrs. Marbeau was away; had been away since the funeral: was expected home on the morrow. That was all.

While Chilon pondered, the nervous agent gently closed the door. Puzzled, his mind still not clear, Chilon retraced his steps. A hotel reading room, opening upon a broad porch, attracted him, and no one seemed to be there. Silently he made his way within the room. The newspaper files hung convenient.

"Died August 20th," were the words his finger had traced in the moonlight; and so he looked for the issue of the 21st. He could not have overlooked the information he sought. One-half of the first two columns were black with "scareheads" setting forth the murder of Richard Marbeau. Bending over the table he read it through, fascinated, his heart almost pulseless, his limbs trembling and the world receding.

The details of the awful item unfolded and lay bare before him. There was much that he had no need to read. The counterpart was in his own mind and memory. It was all clear to him at last. In his frenzy, fevered, crazed, he had arisen and gone forth, carried away by the resolution formed in advance for that night, as one who resolves to wake at dawn will so awaken, —had gone, knife in hand, obedient to his resolution to kill! He was not guilty. He cried out the protest to an inward self; he began at once the defense which was to last so long.

But he had killed; he was a murderer! The press was full of it; the country rang with it, and the police were waiting, watching for the man who struck that fateful blow in the dark! His head swam and ached. He took off his hat to press his numbed, chilled brow; he looked fearfully around. One side of the room was a mirror, but he was not conscious of the fact. There was a man across there staring at him with wild, pale eyes; a man with gray, stubbled beard and snow white hair. He had his hat off and was going to leap upon him with manacles and bear him to the floor. He would have to be quick; he would have to fight a bitter fight, thought the desperate man, edging toward the door. The

other moved and imitated him even to thrusting a hand into a hip pocket. Now for it! With one leap Chilon darted out and fled, his footsteps echoing in the street, fled into the shadow and through alleys until, breathless, he reached the boat and thrust it into the stream. To his disordered brain the bells of the city rang for pursuit, and the river swarmed with boats. He bent to his task, he distanced them, he turned into the little bayou and neared the cabin site, a faint glow lighting the way. But the cabin was gone; in its place were beds of coals and smoking rafters. Among them, face down upon the hearth, lay the voodoo, alone with her awful doom. Breaking through the barricade of fire and smoke he took her in his arms and staggered out. Gone now were the fearful fancies of the night. One person in all the world had succored and sustained him; one had been his friend. He would not desert her! And so, under the glaring eyes of frightened negroes fleeing back into the night, he brought her out of the furnace and laid her in his boat. Her fading eyes gave him gratitude. Her shriveled fingers gave more, as, relaxing, they let fall at his feet that which she had died in saving—the treasure from her hearth, the little hoardings of fifty years.

And so all down the hours of that moon-lit night, between the walls of cane and through the shadowy grottoes of the spreading cypress and the gums, the strangely burdened craft drew on. In the stern sat the pale-eyed, white-haired man, chilled with the realization of his tragedies; in the bow lay the yellow woman; her dim eyes staring into the skies. As before he had journeyed into childhood, freighting the night winds with the breathings of his flowers, so now he turned his back on youth, facing eternity; that which he saw before him a breathless mass that might have stood for grief, remorse, lost hope and unsatisfied longings. Something of this came to him as hour by hour they floated on. He must rid himself of the load if he would face life again; he must sink it beneath the waters forever. Could he do

it? He tried; he crept forward, but when he stretched forth his hand it fell back palsied and useless. For as it hung above her, there came a hush in all the depths about him and a cloud concealed the moon. He had no power over it; that dead, inert mass, whose eyes looked on the skies with the eloquence of supreme despair, was stronger than he.

Suddenly out of the night there arose the friendly skeleton of a bridge flung across the silvered stream. With a shudder, as the spell of horror broke before this human evidence, he leaped upward and clung among the timbers. Slowly the boat and the Thing that lay within it dissolved into the silence and the vagueness while the silvered stream went on. Naught remained but this. Yet, as he waited there, upon the air a strange, sad cry came past like bird on wings, and left him trembling and alone. Something had died in the night; something, he knew not what.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

Four years after the burning of Silvy's cabin on the margin of that southern swamp, in the twilight of a late spring evening the elevator of one of the up town hotels in New York made the ascent for a single passenger who took from the boy in charge an unstamped letter, leisurely fitted his key to a door on the fourth floor and entered a small parlor that looked down upon Broadway. He put aside his light top coat, removing from a pocket a number of unopened letters, and took off his gloves, glasses and hat with a composure that amounted almost to laziness. He was getting a chair in position before his reading table when he turned with a slight frown, as though some irritating thought had for the moment ruffled him.

"Overdone!" he said. Thereupon he clad himself in his impedimenta and went through the process of laying it aside again. "Better," was his single comment upon this. Then he permitted himself to take his mail. For an hour or more he sat at his table opening and answering letters. From several he took remittances of checks or drafts and into several placed bills, some of them of large denomination. To no letter did he attach any signature, when the letter received an enclosure; but to such as required acknowledgment he attached the name Robt. Underhill, the opening phraseology being invariably, "I am instructed by 'W.' to say," etc. He made no copies of his letters, but entered in a little pocket memorandum book a record of the several amounts received and disbursed, with a cipher note opposite each. As he finished reading a letter, he held it against a lighted taper that stood at his elbow and laid it, burning, upon a little metal tray near-by, so that when he reached his last, that only remained in sight. It was the letter

that he had received on the elevator. He broke its seal and opened it.

The manner of this grave, isolated agent had up to this moment been steadily deliberate, but, at sight of the communication within, all of his nonchalance and composure disappeared. That he received it with great surprise and read it with intense interest was manifest. The letter within was addressed to the well known head of a detective bureau, and read as follows:

"Ravenswood ——— ——.

"My Dear Sir: I have business of importance which I wish to intrust to the right person and have been advised by a friend to address a letter to you, asking that you correspond with me upon the subject. The matter is not one that can be entered into without a personal interview. I shall be pleased to see and consult anyone you may send to me, and will hold myself liable for all expenses and charges. I am, sir, with great respect, Your obedient servant,

"CHARLES MARBEAU.

"Reference: Chemical National Bank, New York City."

Across the back of this was a brief but polite expression of regret that the officer had missed Mr. Underhill and a promise that he would call at 10 o'clock next morning upon the business suggested by Mr. Marbeau's letter.

The reader of this letter at length placed it before him upon the table and regarded it with an expression so altered that he scarcely seemed the same man. The name he gazed upon escaped his lips in a whisper:

"Charles Marbeau!" The brief communication seemed to fascinate him. He read it over and over, his mental disturbance increasing with each perusal. Finally he drew a sheet of paper to him and wrote a note stating that "W." would be of no assistance to Mr. Marbeau and was reinclosing the Marbeau letter with it, when doubts again assailed him. He arose and began to walk the room, his pace increasing as he reflected, until, when

consciousness of his environment returned, his cigar was chewed to pieces and he was moving to and fro like a caged animal upon the approach of feed time. His excitement was further indicated by the rapid opening and closing of his hands and the nervous stroking of the hair upon his temples. But at length, as though emerging from some unpleasant dream, he stopped short, and shook his head angrily.

"Four years!" he exclaimed. "And what does it amount to when an accidental letter can undo all? It is easier to die to the world than to stay dead!" With a return of his old lazy manner, he shut off the light, drew his chair to the open window and putting his feet upon the casement, calmly lit a fresh cigar. Here was a matter to be decided, and he could think best alone and in the dark. It was a habit!

The hours passed; a steady spark burned at the open window against the darkness behind it, and a slender coil of smoke unwound itself in the outer air, spread into a thin veil and dissolved; and still the silent man reflected. But when, for the second time after midnight, in some faraway steeple, the hour was struck, and the roar of life in the streets below sank to a murmur, he cast his cigar outward.

"I accept the challenge!" he said, with a yawn, and slept.

When the murmur of life in the great monster outside deepened slowly to a sullen roar, and the sunlight streamed down upon him, he was still sleeping, and this is what the sun beheld: A face as pallid as any nun's, with that peculiar transparent complexion sometimes born of organic disease, a white mustache and fine white hair clustering in ringlets about a well-shaped head, dark eyebrows and eyelashes, a mouth whose lines indicated both the suffering and resolution that blend in melancholy, a straight, slender nose, a light, compact and active rather than muscular figure, and the delicate hands and feet that often come with good blood. Over all,

more apparent, perhaps, while the man slept, was an air, a suggestion, that clung to, that surrounded him, which would be read differently, as the temperament and experience of those who might behold it, varied. One might term it the aftermath of dissipation and reform; another the record of night work and great responsibilities demanding mental effort without rest. And others, still looking back into their own lives, would say that, born for one thing, fate had hurried this man to its opposite and left him with all his protests made visible. And they would have been the more convinced in this if at the moment he opened his eyes, which he did when seven o'clock rang from so many brazen throats, they had been looking closely. At that moment these were simply pale gray, paler than the coldest sky of winter, and lusterless. The change came when resolution superseded consciousness. When he arose and returned to the letter upon his desk all estimates would have been changed. That which makes the man, at last, had come back into the casket, and nowhere did the change show so strongly as in the then wide-open eyes, for in them burned a flame so distinct, so electrical, that no one could view them once and say that aught of his powers was dissipated, or that mental pressure had consumed his nervous force, or that fate had laid upon him burdens greater than could be borne in triumph. The light that rose and fell therein was not reflected, but direct, a ray projected, its intensity dependent upon the mental activity beyond. This effect was heightened by two conditions, the darkness of brow and lashes, and the pallor of the face.

But as he stood over the smoking letter in its tray, the letter last written, the expression of his face and eyes was marked and pathetic, for the light that gleamed so strongly the moment before, now shrunk to a mere glow seen dimly under the drooping lids. Whatever was the thought, it passed and the man was again cold, calm and alert. He glanced about the room; everything

ı order. On the desk not a scrap of paper was to
:n. The daily records of his life were written in,
t to him, undecipherable language upon the pages
)ook a few inches long; and—in that mysterious
)er lit by the flame that lit his eyes.
:ing his letters he passed to the inner room. An
later, upon the elevator, he said to the boy in
e:
gentleman will call to see me at 10 o'clock. Let
ıto my parlor and say that I will be detained a half
'

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INFORMATION BUREAU.

The four years that had passed over Chilon Marbeau since he floated upon a moonlit river with the corpse of his benefactress facing him in the boat, had left a clear imprint upon his mental and his physical constitution. Physically he was improved, for freedom and diversity of scenes and occupation had done much to restore what confinement had effaced. His frame was again erect, his step firm and confident, and in that unfathomable air which distinguishes each individual from his fellows there was something even of the spirit that marked his younger manhood. But mentally he was neither the boy who went blindly to his fate nor the man who came back to Ravenswood, passionate, impotent, unreasoning and fevered by desire for revenge. That man, too, was dead; the last stepping stone for the new man who came with one object in life; but calmer, colder, more determined and consistent, careless of danger and ready to sacrifice everything to accomplish his purpose. He now had but one ambition, the finding of Carl Garner.

It cannot be said of Chilon that at this time he had absolutely no thought of the years at Ravenswood and of Lena. He had bitter memories that came in the night time and kept their vigils even as he slept; but habit had helped him to conquer these, for, come when they might, he resolutely turned his back upon them before they enslaved his will and found in action, quick, ceaseless action, a foil. The old dream of love, he realized, was impossible. He felt that Lena could never, would never, clasp the hand that had murdered her husband, hated and despised even though he had been. For her the past must have been reduced to one night and a chamber of horrors.

Remorse he had known until his mind reacted, and

renewed health filled his blood with the elements of strength. That dead face looked into his for many weeks, but the time came when that, too, passed. He still felt that the acts of one crazed by fever, controlled by a mental suggestion emanating from another, and dazed by drugs, carried no responsibility. But he knew, also, that no statement of these causes could remove from the mind of the woman he had loved the impression of that night's bloody work. He had sworn to kill Richard Marbeau if they met. They had met, and Richard was dead. She would not split hairs over the mental condition of his murderer. The certainty that such a crime was possible to him under any conditions would be sufficient.

He put aside that part of his life as best he could and took up his mission with a fierce but quiet satisfaction. When the object of all this effort was accomplished, and Carl Garner had suffered for his crimes, then he would go back to Ravenswood and call a family convocation. In the presence of his kindred he would tell his story proudly and exhibit such proofs as he might gather. Then he would go away; where, he had never determined. That one hour of satisfaction was all the reward he desired, and to gain it he had bent, and was bending, every energy and every talent that he could bring into play.

There is no need in this history to follow Chilon Marbeau after his wild flight from Ravenswood. A lumber vessel bore him to Norway; another brought him to New York. Sustained by less than a keen sense of his wrongs and the losses he had incurred, he might have run the gamut of crime and have become linked to the irredeemables. He did indeed mix with them; he made his life among them, finding several whom he had once known, without revealing his history! but in that direction lay his life's work. He began in that field, not the study of crime, but of criminals, and had the good fortune to bring about the arrest of a noted absconder, and find

himself in funds again; for Silvy's little savings were well nigh exhausted. In this arrest he was not known; he simply pointed out the criminal. Other successes upon the same line followed, the credit going elsewhere, while he kept in the background. Publicity would have destroyed his opportunities and have endangered his main object; for the plan that Chilon had gradually evolved, acting upon the suggestions of his accidental success, was an acquaintance with the skilled criminals of America, either personal or through agents.

Chilon Marbeau had no ambition to be a detective, nor was he ever one. The business that he built up with marvelous skill was based simply upon business principles and deep insight into human nature. It was a business that would have been successful, administered with equal genius, in any country and any age. He had no induction theory like delightful Mr. Sherlock Holmes, nor did he believe that every crime leaves its marks by which the guilty can be identified. He knew on the contrary, that the majority of criminals, pursued by the best detectives the world over, escape the law, and that great robberies are simply the outcome of experience gained in safety. His system was to keep in touch with the criminal society of all great cities, beginning with New York, through those secret lines of criminal news current in all the under circles. He had discovered that always at least one man not actually engaged therein knew the principals in every great premeditated crime, either before or after its commission. He knew also that men who will rob banks and rich dwelling houses, and murder to escape arrest, need money, and when men of that character need money it was with them a question simply of how to get it without arousing suspicion in their own circles against themselves. He discovered also that the theory of "honor among thieves" was a fiction, born largely of the yellow back novels, and did not exist except, apparently, in the division of spoils, and that then the absolute necessity of leaving every

er satisfied was the controlling motive; that even
:ipals in crime were ready, for a consideration, to
up valuable information.

brief the system was simply a bureau for the safe
profitable handling of information bearing upon
e. It was not a system planned in advance, but
that developed, in which few men engaged knew
: than one other man therein, or that there was any
r besides his principal; or that even such a system
ed outside his own little entourage. The informer
received a rich reward for his information himself
me soon a quiet searcher with underworkers, there
ɜ go-betweens all the way down.

ɔt many of this secret order, whose ramifications ex-
ed into most great centers of population, had ever
or heard of Chilon Marbeau, or Robert Underhill,
: chose to be known. In the earlier days of the busi-
in order to avoid contact with the authorities, he
himself as much in the background as was possible.
ıe head and front of it, attention would necessarily be
cted toward him; but not so if he was the agent only
e highest power. And this great imaginary unknown
:iled under the simple initial "W.," a letter that had
ll members of his family a peculiar significance.

ıt Chilon was the head and front, the man who at
made the exchange of knowledge for money and
:d the larger part, sometimes all, to the proper per-

His custom in these matters was rigid; every man
dealt with him was known only by a number which
signed to his communication, and as money, and not
s, were remitted back through the mails, no clue
left. The safety of this plan, and the good faith, skill
honesty of its head, made the business profitable
hose engaged in it.

this enterprise, Chilon, in the background, received
ɔtice from the press. But if no advertisement of his
: went abroad, the people who make the study of
: a business appreciated his skill and mysterious pow-

er. The bureaux that exist for the detection of criminals knew him in a business way without knowing even that he possessed an established system, or whom he represented, and were well satisfied always by the credit of success and a portion of the rewards earned. The few people with whom he came in contact in his business were too sensible to even admit of his existence.

Some of Chilon's performances along his chosen line were, to even the detective bureau, simply marvelous. At six o'clock one afternoon he addressed a note to a police chief informing him that a certain bank would be attacked at one o'clock after midnight. The bank was watched, and burglars arrested. On another occasion the murder of a prominent official in New England was followed the next afternoon by the arrest of the criminal in New York. A great financial institution was told that its bookkeeper was "short." An entire counterfeiting outfit was seized before the plates had been used; and an insurance company that contemplated paying a death loss running up to half a hundred thousand received information of the existence of the alleged defunct policy holder. But his greatest coup was the finding of a bank officer who had, without the public hearing of it, carried away nearly the entire assets of his institution. Within a week the matter was compromised and the institution, the stock of which contained a personal liability clause, was saved. For this he received a sum so large as to place him with his savings beyond the reach of want, and enable him to save his under agents from crime through necessity.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOME YEARNING.

In the prosecution of this work Chilon found excitement and occupation but not what he worked for above all things—Carl Garner. The man, bold and skillful as he knew him to be, ought, in the years he had watched, to come to the surface somewhere. But no arrest in the United States, in all that time, furnished the slightest trace of Carl Garner. No photograph of any gallery of rogues held his face since the crime, for which he had been imprisoned, was expiated. That he had been reformed was impossible; men of his temperament never reform. He was dead or in some state prison, or had left the country. So Chilon reasoned. Garner's conviction had been accomplished in Chicago; if still in the United States he should be found in New York or Philadelphia, for men of his tastes and history would not be content anywhere else. Chilon's watch upon these two cities had been close and he had for his assistants the whole detective and police system of both. Not the slightest trace of Carl Garner could be found.

These were the circumstances of the case, and his environment, when Chilon gave the greater part of that May night to thought. He had, when he accepted the challenge of fate, determined to risk an interview with Charles Marbeau, his uncle. Before doing this, however, he had already determined to take a greater risk and forever put at rest any doubt as to the thoroughness of his own disguise. Time had given him great confidence in the changes that had been wrought in his personal appearance. He had been in the presence of more than one who had known him, without attracting notice, and one of these was a detective who had testified in his trial. The chief representative of the secret service of the United

States, who had been present at that trial, was now occupying a commanding position in the same branch of government service at Washington, and the determination he had arrived at was to place himself in a business way before this man. He had carefully gone over every feature of his case as he sat at the window, and he felt assured that with sufficient nerve to back him, he could not be identified, even if suspected. The worst that could happen to him, if he did not break down, would be a temporary inconvenience. There was but one weak point in his defense—his handwriting. He could not recall any specimen of his handwriting in existence within reach of the government, except his prison signature, and the statement filed upon his trial. If he emerged successfully from the conflict in Washington he would continue southward.

Chilon had a definite and important object in making the second venture. The sight of the well-known handwriting of his uncle had brought a rush of memories that almost overwhelmed him. He gave way to it for once; as he faced the stars, smoking in that open window, his mind recalled the old house and all its lovely surroundings. It was May, the roses were blooming and the lilies were opening on the lake. All the grand old trees were green again and vocal with the songs of birds. The smell of magnolias seemed to float in upon and disarm him. What were they all doing down there? Who were there? Was Lena? His heart leaped once more at the suggestion. And if she were, could he face her? He did not know. It would be a test, indeed. She must, if suspicious of his identity, remain in doubt, if he showed no sign; and he would show none. But it was not likely that the house which contained the memory of that tragedy would be her home again. And yet, perhaps she was there; he might go and stand and see her face again,——. He turned, however, from the thought, resolutely. If that were all, he would not go back. But there was more. He

had often been doubtful of his course should he ever meet Carl Garner. He did not desire to stain his hands with the man's blood. His intention was to consign him to the fate he himself had endured, and, to this end, he had accumulated a store of counterfeit bills. When arrest should be made these bills would be found in Garner's possession and under the circumstances which had caused his friend's ruin, he would go to a living death. In the consummation of this scheme he saw poetic justice, and it was perfect even in another way. When, with Garner, he stopped at Silvy's cabin, the former had given to her one of the bills just printed. In the savings of the old negress Chilon had found that bill.

This bill should be the instrument of his conviction. It was the last cent he had saved of her little hoard.

But this justice, though poetic, was commonplace, and with his new profession had come a pride. His return for the injury should be more perfect, and would, he believed, have a potent effect if ever he made an effort to remove the shadow from his life; he desired to go to Ravenswood for the plates. With them again in his possession, he would wreak a revenge when the time came that would leave nothing to be desired. His mind was made up when he burned the letter.

When Chilon returned to his room at the appointed hour he paused at the door, his hand upon the knob. He bore with him a letter. In his efforts to undo nature's work in his own case he had for four years attacked impulse as his most dangerous foe. In the analysis of himself and the causes that led up to his ruin, he readily recognized that the acts done under impulse were the beginning of all his troubles. As he stood by the door, balancing the letter in his hand, his face grave and stern again, he asked himself the test question, "Is this from impulse?" He debated both sides of the question in silence; was he really advancing the cause for which he had labored so long? Was he not risking all for something that was not

essential to the success of his plans? Were not the plates safer at Ravenswood than anywhere else? Suppose Garner had been spotted, might he not then go for and obtain the plates? And was it wise to awaken the watchdogs of the treasury? "Let sleeping dogs lie," came to his mind. On the other hand the plates might never again be accessible. He lost his opportunity four years ago in those few weeks of passionate despair, and this was the first that had appeared since. His uncle might die, the property change hands, and the rubbish be cleared away. It was a contingency that had worried him not a little. He would make the venture.

But again the little mentor within asked a question. He did not reply. Opening the door, he entered his room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WAKING THE SLEEPING DOGS.

Chilon found himself face to face with a small, quiet man who wore glasses and looked like a chief clerk. They had met before. Their greetings were stiff and formal.

"We received your letter," said Chilon, simply, "but are at a loss to know why we should have been applied to——"

"I know, Mr. Underhill," the other replied, smiling, "you keep no information unused; you have no force to call upon for detail work. You have repeatedly told us that. But we are extremely anxious to oblige Mr. Marbeau in this matter and are taking all the chances. Your friend, 'W,' has done so many surprising things that we simply cannot neglect him. If he says no, why that ends it; but he has not said no, yet." Chilon studied the face of his visitor. There was nothing behind the statement; he had none but the facts as stated.

"What is the case?" he asked, at length. The visitor seemed relieved, and drew his chair to the window, at the same time producing his memoranda.

"Mr. Marbeau," he began, "is a very warm friend of our friends here and they have made us an urgent appeal in his behalf. The case is simply one of disappearance. He quarreled with his nephew seventeen years ago and the latter left home, and has not been heard of since. He is now extremely anxious to find him."

"Why does he wish to find him?"

"That, we have not ascertained. Mr. Marbeau, or Colonel Marbeau, as he is called, is one of the old school southerners, impractical and chivalrous, the soul of honor and always wrong in politics—about as difficult a man to do business with as one can imagine, from what I hear. We sent our ablest man to him, and his report reads like an adventure."

"What possible cause could there be for the young man's silence if he is not dead or in prison?"

"That is what we asked, and that question brought on the storm," continued the visitor, laughing. "The old gentleman raved over the idiocy of his New York friends who had sent a man a thousand miles at his expense to insult him. He declared that whatever justification there might be in the theory of his nephew's death, there could be none in a theory of crime; that the young man, while wild and high-tempered, was the soul of honor—or he wouldn't have been a Marbeau."

"Well," said Chilon, coldly, "I fail to see anything humorous in that. What progress have you made?"

"Absolutely none." Chilon thought a moment.

"And the name of this boy?"

"Was Chilon."

"Married?"

"He had been."

"Wife living?" His heart almost stood still under the strain placed upon it.

"That we did not ascertain. She obtained a divorce and remarried."

"I see!" And then, after a moment's thought—"I have written your people a letter which I wish to deliver here. I shall be glad if you will read it. You will understand why I have interrupted you in the other matter." The visitor, much surprised, opened the letter, which was addressed to his agency. It stated the past services of "W" and asked that an opinion upon the bill inclosed be obtained from the treasury at Washington. It also stated that if the bill were counterfeit it would mark the beginning of one of the most important cases undertaken by the treasury. The writer, it added, had information which could not be imparted to the Treasury as yet, but might some day.

The visitor looked carefully upon the bill and then the man.

"But it is not counterfeit!" he said.

"It is, however. The best counterfeit the world has ever seen!" The interest of the professional was now fully aroused. If this were true—if this new bill were indeed counterfeit, it meant business of the highest order.

"Have you got the men spotted?" he asked, suppressing his eagerness.

"The reason why I have brought up this matter," said Chilon, disregarding the question, "is this: If the Treasury cares to see me, I shall go south from Washington for a few weeks upon business and for recreation and will call on Mr., or Colonel Marbeau, in person—to oblige you. I can then determine if anything may be done."

"The Treasury will want to see you, Mr. Underhill." The detective smiled over some thought that had risen in mind, a smile that did not escape Chilon. "I am greatly obliged by your decision to let this matter come up through us. I think that you will be wired for to-morrow! And in the case of Colonel Marbeau you have taken a load off my mind. You will hear from me!"

Chilon stood a moment, looking at the closed door.

"What will be the end?" he asked himself. For reply the door reopened and the visitor looked in.

"By the way, Mr. Underhill, did you get a report from us in the old Garner case?"

"No."

"You will, then. Carl Adams, or Grant, was in New York a week ago. He disappeared again, but we think we can reach him."

A cry, half uttered, half suppressed, rang out in the room. Instantly, however, Chilon stood calm and white. He saw the astonishment in the face that was turned to him. With a slight gesture he concluded carelessly:

"Add one thousand dollars to the reward."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DEPARTURE.

Chilon stood to depart from an uptown school of acting, his friend, the professor, swinging his glasses between two fingers and speaking with animation:

"I have found you, my dear Mr. Underhill, the most conscientious, the most satisfactory pupil to whom I have ever given voice culture. Your attendance upon the gymnasium, your daily open air exercise, your work here have all been perfect, your attention scrupulous and your efforts gratifying. You ask my opinion of the results; well, I give it with pleasure. Your control of voice is remarkable; in your recitation and reading of those selections which call for deliberation—and—eh—eh—a sort of lassitude,—give me the word;—I mean the opposite of nervous haste,—your delivery there is simply marvelous. In other respects you are beyond praise. In short, while you, of course, lack the dramatic training, I think that I may say no man on the American stage has better control of his voice. As for the voice itself, there are few like it. You southerners——"

"You still persist in that opinion, I see. You make me southern nolens volens!"

"Excellent, my dear Mr. Underhill. That tone, that expression! You are giving me back my training! But pardon me; I did not intend to intrude. I will finish my sentence another way. Generally speaking, the cold climate of the north seems to make taut the vocal chords by contracting the muscles that engage them; and all northern nations show the effect in their voices. The southerners, however, have naturally that which we find so hard to teach others, perfect relaxation of all the muscles of neck, throat and mouth. Their bronchial system being generally perfect they make good subjects.

The very best of them, I think, are of French extraction, who unite with this general muscular relaxation a nervous force and quickness that fits them for dramatic work. Of course there are exceptions," he quickly added, with fine tact, fancying that a shade of annoyance showed upon his pupil's face; "northern people occasionally come to me well equipped; but the heredity of such as I have traced, leads back into southern blood."

"And now," said Chilon, extending his hand, "I am off for a bit of travel and must say good-bye. If some day you hear that I am charming the fickle public for a few brief weeks as Monte Cristo, or Dundreary, you will, I know, be pleased. And if you do not hear anything, console yourself with the reflection that you have made life pleasanter for me. But, by the way, we were speaking some time ago of the possibilities of the human voice; would it be possible for a man to so change his voice and voice-tones as to deceive his best friends,—even his own family?"

"Yes! If his whole personal appearance were changed, it would be possible; but if his outer disguise were not perfect it would be next to impossible. It would require visible changes so extensive and complete as to prevent the accidental reversion to old voice-tones and accents from setting up a connection with his true self in the memory of his friends. But, if you are going to try such an experiment, don't use the voice in song. You must leave off your singing for the time being. No man can change his voice beyond discovery in singing." They parted, and speaking to himself, as he watched the retreating form of his late pupil, the professor concluded: "I should like to know the name of the character he has been acting for the last year!"

But the actor's mind was upon other things. It was to be his last day in New York for an indefinite period. The Treasury had sent him an urgent call. A down-town car landed him near the United States Court, where he

soon stood waiting. His quiet dignity and self-possession secured him prompt attention.

"I desire," he said, in the calm, gentle voice that was everywhere a guarantee of courteous treatment, "to look at the papers in the case of Carl Garner, convicted in this court on the —— day —— of counterfeiting, if they can be conveniently reached." He presented a card that bore a penciled open sesame as he spoke. The files were soon found and the papers placed upon a desk for his examination. As he sat with his back to the office force he apparently made notes of the trial, and then with thanks passed back the package, neatly tied, and with "good-morning, gentlemen," took his departure.

"Life would be endurable," said a voice from a mass of papers, as Chilon disappeared, "if all men were like that. Actually tied up the papers with a bow knot. Think of it!"

"Too polite!" The rejoinder was from a veteran. "Chances are the government has lost a paper!"

Chilon had just time to catch the Washington express from Jersey City, where his baggage had already been sent. He soon stood oblivious to his company on the forward deck of the ferry boat. Something had oppressed him since the waking hour. Delicately sensitive to influences, he was almost a believer in the theory of mental telegraphy. Many times during the four years of discipline and struggle through which he had passed he had been sensible in advance of important events, a thing laughed at by many practical men who are unable to give an explanation for less than half the decisions they form in business. The feeling was strong upon him that day. He had, however, ample cause for it; despite the philosophic deliberateness of his movements, he had within the previous twenty-four hours formed a momentous decision, and was severing old ties again. Besides, he was venturing upon dangerous grounds, and he was at last ready to admit that his judgment was not satisfied. It

was too late, however, to turn back—even if he had so desired. He drew from his pocket a document; read it curiously,—tore it into infinitesimals and gave it to the ocean breeze. The shiny bits of paper sailed and dipped in whirling air, sinking one by one and blending in the foamy water.

The hoarse shriek of the boat's whistle recalled him from his dream, and he looked up to behold a steamship veering off in front, its funnels pouring out volumes of black, volcanic smoke. A hundred faces looked down upon him and handkerchiefs waved in the air towards the distant dock where parting friends still gave their farewells. But for him there was no friend behind, in front nor beside him; and yet he was crossing a gulf wider than the ocean and facing a danger worse than death. From what shores had his bark of life been sailing so long, so stormily? To what harbor would it return? Or would it sink in the depths, leaving no sign?

Little tugs rushed to and fro over the blue waters, and white sails were fading into the haze of the bay like childhood dreams half seen upon awaking. The white sunlight fell upon and glorified the liberty goddess on Bedloe's Island; life, color and motion filled the scene. He felt rather than observed all these; he was facing southward again, and he was unsatisfied. He cast one farewell, impatient look about him; the scene had changed in a moment. Or was it his mood? The tall buildings across the river behind stood like monuments; some, seen from the rear, bare of decorations, seemed prisons; and silence overhung them all. Down the river the black mass of the passing ocean liner with its volumes of smoke had obscured the goddess. The oracles would have bid him turn back; but in this age men believe chiefly in themselves!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DUEL.

When Chilon, upon the morning after his arrival in Washington, entered the presence of the government's representative in the secret service division of the Treasury, returned the courteous greeting accorded him, slowly put aside his coat and hat and drew off his gloves, he had very much the appearance of a duelist making his last preparations for conflict. He felt, without observing the keen, close questioning scrunity to which he was being subjected; he knew that the examination was being made, if for the reason only that had their positions been reversed, he would have seized eagerly upon the opportunity as the only one likely to occur. Therefore, when he completed his preparations and took the seat that had been indicated, he was prepared to find the other's attention elsewhere, as it was. He was adjusting the papers upon his desk.

The examination had been, though brief, complete. The officer was naturally interested in the personality of one, or the representative of one who, although unknown to the press, had accomplished more in four years in the suppression and exposure of crime, than any living man; who took no credit for his services, nor fees aside from the rewards that were offered; who held himself as far as possible aloof from police and detective bureaus; and whose own life history and antecedents, as well as those of his principal, were veiled in profound mystery. He knew of this man imperfectly as an interesting phenomenon, a living, but very useful mystery. He was the mouth piece, the vade mecum of "W." Who was "W." and who was Robert Underhill? Where there is a mystery in the life of any man there is a reason; and generally the reason is not creditable. So argued the government's servant,

ho, the necessities of this history require, shall be desig-
ated by other than his proper title. Described as The
eneral, he loses only his name.

By that intuition which marks the successful man the
orld over, Chilon knew the tenor of his antagonist's
ought—for antagonist he considered him. And he knew
at the mere fact that he was himself unknown would
ake the examination a close one. The conflict toward
hich he had for years looked forward as inevitable was
t hand; he was as nearly ready as he would ever be.
is disguise would never be more perfect; nor his powers
nder better control. Neither fame nor distinction would
eward him if he succeeded; his future was not assured.
f he failed—a living death awaited him.

The faintest smile marked his pale face as his eyes met
ose of the other.

"I am directed to say that your message was received
romptly by the gentleman to whom it was addressed,
nd who still prefers to remain unknown; that he is not
ccustomed to consult with any one, being not open to
usiness engagements, but ready at all times, from pa-
riotic motives, to assist the government. I represent
im with full power to act, and you may speak frankly in
onference!"

The General reflected a moment, his eyes still upon the
isitor's face.

At length he began:

"I must admit, Mr. Underhill, that we are greatly dis-
urbed and puzzled over the counterfeit bill that has come
nto our possession through you gentlemen," he nodded
o a typewriter sitting near, who immediately withdrew.
'Four years ago there escaped from us a man named
arl Garner, convicted in 1874 of counterfeiting. He and
is gang, no other member of which was ever arrested
—"

"There was no gang," said Chilon, "but pardon me,
roceed."

"You know of the case, then?"

"Somewhat. I know that you convicted an innocent man. But I shall be glad to hear all the particulars."

"This man, after his escape, disappeared as completely as though swallowed up by the earth. Nothing has been heard of him, not the slightest clew or trace found—until recently."

"Indeed!"

"Personally, I was rather pleased to think that the poor fellow recovered his freedom, for I was present, as it happened, at the trial in New York, and was inclined to think that he was victimized."

"He was victimized," said Chilon, softly, his eyes half-closing and the look of interest deepening on his face. He advanced his chair a little. "Do you not still think so?"

"You were present at the trial, also?"

"My principal was. I have read and heard several accounts of it, and I would be a poor judge of human nature, General, which I am not, if I did not believe in his innocence." The General's face wore a look of surprise. He continued:

"The trouble is, that not only have the plates never been recovered——"

"Ah, I had not heard that!" Again the visitor smiled.

"But they are being used again." Chilon's face did not change expression.

"It is impossible!" he said, with decision. "For then assuredly he would have been guilty!"

"He was guilty, Mr. Underhill. The government must arrest him and secure those plates."

"You argue that——"

"The country will otherwise be flooded with the most dangerous counterfeit ever put forth. You may possibly remember that the so-called experts were everywhere deceived. The bill was so nearly perfect that only the closest comparison could reveal the counterfeit. The worst

f it is, even an ordinary engraver could, by a few lines, ıake the plate so correct as to deceive even the Treasry."

"Have you the bill? And do you mind showing me ıe defects?" Chilon moved his chair against the desk nd adjusted his glasses.

"This bill," said the other, opening his papers, "which ras sent us from New York a few days since, is new and he only one detected since the trial and conviction of Garner."

"Is it possible!" Chilon took the bill and noted the ıumber. It was, of course, from Silvy's little hoard.

"You perceive it is a new bill—or has never been in irculation. You are not at liberty to say how it was disovered, I suppose?"

"I am not. Where is the defect in it, General?" he asked, ıfter a brief inspection.

"There is a difference in the feeling, to begin with, so he Treasury people say; something that neither you nor I, probably, can detect; a difference arising from the act that a light hand-press was used for the counterfeit, ınd a heavy machine press for the genuine. Here is a genuine bill of the same issue. Look closely and you will note that in the bad bill the little curl to the treasurer's signature is too short and the shading in the drapery of the figure and on the face in the medallion is a trifle too light. With these exceptions, the plate is, for all practical purposes, perfect, the most marvelous counterfeit the world ever saw, and consequently the work of an artist of the highest order. Carl Garner is not the engraver; and yet the plates were not in use during his imprisonment. It would seem from this that he certainly controls them."

"If, then, the original artist, or one of fairly good skill, should take these plates, add the curl to the signature, deepen the shading on the face of the medallion and print the bills on the right kind of paper and the right kind of press, the product would pass even the Treasury!"

"It would be necessary to call in and destroy every bill of that issue! And that would not cure the evil. We would never know when they were all in."

The chief laid aside the bill. He lifted his eyes and they met those of his visitor. For ten seconds, perhaps, they gazed at each other. The government officer's face grew pale and then flushed with the sudden return of blood. Not a muscle of the cold, white face confronting him changed, but the gray eyes were lit with a marvelous flame, and they carried a message across the table. In that moment The General knew that the man he wanted was before him, and Chilon knew that he was recognized.

CHAPTER XXXI

AT BAY!

The General fingered his papers uneasily and moved in is chair, while a quiet smile hovered about the mouth of is visitor. Presently the latter drew from his pocket a ittle silver case and leisurely exposed a half dozen slender, panish cigars.

"Is it permitted?" he asked, carelessly. The General odded his head quickly. "I may then offer you one;— ou will find them above the ordinary."

"I do not smoke." The General spoke absently, the ook of perplexity still clouding his fine face. Chilon ighted a wax match and held it a moment against the to- acco. He felt again the keen, swift look of scrunity, and ising, walked off slowly to where he might drop the match in a cuspidor. Over the face of the government officer suddenly flashed a new look.

"Magnificent," he murmured. Then aloud:

"You have had a romantic history, Mr. Underhill!" Chilon paused as he was about to seat himself.

"You are acquainted with my history, then?"

"Well,—not exactly. You are aware, perhaps, though, hat even the most secretive men are not always un- nown."

"Ah!" Chilon smoked tranquilly. He left no encour- gement, but The General made a bold plunge.

"Leading the life that you do——"

"You also know the life I lead?"

"Again,—not exactly. But I know that you are a won- erful discoverer of evidence, Mr. Underhill, and it is easy o infer the life you lead. I was going to ask you what ection has the honor of claiming your birthplace?"

"None, I am afraid!" And then, "but, really, I remem- ber nothing beyond my third year, looking backwards."

"Which means?"

"That in my present occupation the less one reveals of himself the greater his powers. The public likes a mystery—especially the public I look to. And I merely represent another, as you seem to forget."

"I see. No one, then, knows your history, nor that of 'W.'?"

"No one knows me but God," was the grave answer. The General looked up quickly.

"Are you sure?" he asked, smiling, this time, himself.

"Quite sure, sir!"

"You forget that the government has many keen eyes! Perhaps more of your history is known than you imagine!" Chilon met the smile with one that, accompanied by his reply, might have passed for a covert sneer. He carelessly lifted the counterfeit bill and laid it down again. The General nodded his head.

"Well answered," he said. "I see, Mr. Underhill, that you are bound to preserve your,—mystery, and I beg your pardon if I have seemed over-inquisitive; but 'W, care of Robert Underhill' and 'W, through Robert Underhill, informs the government,' etc., have puzzled me more than any mystery I have ever encountered. The government is bound to admit the value of your assistance, especially in the arrest of the other counterfeiters,—and gave substantial proof, if I remember."

"Entirely satisfactory, I believe, sir!"

"That case, and the information leading to the arrest of the defaulting postmaster of ——, and the whereabouts of the murderer of the Tennessee revenue officer,—cases so diverse and in places so far apart, argue a system almost too wonderful to admit. It would be worth a great deal to the government."

"Absolutely nothing!" said Chilon, gravely; "absolutely nothing under any other management!" The General was silent, still regarding with admiration the firm, pale face before him.

Chilon sat looking down in silence.

"I am not at liberty to say as much, General, on this subject as you wish, but I will tell you one naked fact, upon your word of honor as to secrecy!"

"You have it, of course!"

"It has never been told before. The system, such a system as you suspect, really exists. Its head and front is 'W'! I am simply the connecting link between him and the world. No other man knows him. It is a system widely extended, and reaching where no detective could penetrate."

"May I ask upon what the system is founded?"

"The weakness of human nature! We simply represent a bureau for handling profitably criminal information. Through us the friends of the rogue, the murderer, the thief, the counterfeiter, the defaulter, his partners in crime, even the women who wear his jewels, may sell him to justice with perfect safety. They sell him. That is all! We do not detect, we do not arrest, we are unknown. A few heads of detective bureaus know me; a few chiefs of police, and—occasionally a government officer. You once offered us a case; we declined it because we would not know where to begin. If information does not come to us, we simply do not get it. If it does come and is good, he receives it, to whom it is most useful! No man in any prison would recognize me if I walked among them!" It was an accidental ending. He looked up to find The General watching him, fascinated. He saw the impression he had made, and continued: "That is the secret;—all of it, practically, except the name of the man I represent, and that is of no service to you, even were I permitted to use it. It may strike you as strange that I come here and reveal this to you in a business conversation, but, frankly, I have a good reason for it, which will presently appear. In the meantime, what can we do for you,—in the case in hand?"

"We want Carl Garner and the plates from which this bill was printed."

"Have you a description of him?"

"Here it is!"

"You will kindly read it aloud. I wish to compare it with a picture in my mind."

"Height, five feet nine inches; weight, 146 pounds; dark complexion, hair brown, and curly when not cropped; face clean shaven, mouth well formed and sensitive, nose slender and straight and teeth white, even and perfect; carries himself with slight stoop, is quick of speech and of nervous temperament. That was Carl Garner seventeen years ago. Of course, time must have wrought many changes; and he has had four years in which to assist. He may be gray by now and have a mustache. By persistent effort he may have changed his method of speech and have subdued his nervousness." He spoke this slowly, and upon concluding fixed a piercing look upon his vis-a-vis. Chilon, with half-closed eyes, was leaning back, tapping thoughtfully with his pencil upon his even white teeth. He took up where the other left off.

"But in all likelihood he still has his dark complexion and brown eyes." Opening his own, he sat upright and looked The General full in the face. The confidence of that officer received a severe shock.

"Well,—it would seem so, it would seem so!" he said, hastily; "brown eyes would hardly turn to gray, at least." Again the quiet smile returned to the visitor's face for an instant, and then vanished.

"There is one other thing forgotten. Have you a specimen of this man Garner's handwriting?"

"No,—we have not! But, stay!"

From his papers, with excitement well-suppressed but still evident, he took up the newspaper clipping and read it carefully. "A specimen can be obtained." He reached his hand toward the electric button, but paused, a look of exultation upon his face, in spite of his efforts. "Do you

mind writing me a telegram while I look over these papers more carefully? Perhaps I have——"

"Certainly not." Chilon took up a pen and drew a blank toward him, The General, as he handled his papers, dictating:

"Clerk of U. S. Dist. Court, New York City—In re Carl Garner, convicted counterfeiting, April, 1874; send original of prisoner's statement."

Chilon passed over the message for signature.

"Thanks, Mr. Underhill. Excuse my troubling you!"

Chilon nodded, carelessly.

"It is hardly necessary to send that," he said quietly. "I can always see it there. In fact, I saw it yesterday. I took occasion to make some notes upon Garner's case, as I will presently explain, and went over that statement with the other papers!"

Again the two men faced each other. Again The General read aright the smiling eyes fixed upon him. With a grave bow he laid the telegram with the papers in the case and put them aside.

"I will consider the matter," he said. "You inferred, then, that it was about Garner I wished to see you; may I ask why?"

"First, General, let me go on with the main question. What do you want of us?"

"Briefly, then, to find Carl Garner."

"I have already shown that finding people whose whereabouts we do not know already is out of our line; but that is not my answer. What are your terms, sir?"

"The terms I offer, Mr. Underhill, are subject to ratification. For information leading to the arrest of Garner we will pay one thousand dollars."

"One thousand!" The inflection, the surprise, was perfect. "Small, is it not? Very little for a man who can make such five dollar bills as that?"

"For the plates the government will pay ten thousand, if necessary."

"Cheap plates, cheap plates!" said Chilon, shaking his head slowly. "Garner would do better to cure the few defects in them and print his own rewards!"

The General arose suddenly and looked down angrily upon his visitor. Then he began to pace the room. He paused at intervals, staring fixedly at Chilon and debating a question in his mind. If this were indeed Garner, he should not be allowed to leave that room a free man. But if he were arrested how could he be held? Upon a writ of habeas corpus he would regain his freedom in twenty-four hours. The description did not fit him, and the burden of proof was on the government. And would arrest secure the plates? It had already failed once. He dismissed the idea. Long experience and Chilon's manner convinced him that there was a better course.

"Mr. Underhill," he said, finally, "I believe you are the man for this enterprise. The government will ratify anything in reason that I promise or you claim in the surrender of these plates. What would you propose?"

He returned to his chair. Chilon arose, and carrying his cigar to the cuspidor, stood a moment in thought.

"General," he said, "forgive me if I seem to have trifled with you in this matter; I have not. My profession has made me the receiver of information, and I wanted to hear the case as it appeared to you. I know Garner's already from his own lips."

The General regarded him steadily without reply.

"So far as Garner himself is concerned, he will never be sent back to prison, and the plates cannot be bought for money."

"What, then, does he want?"

"Briefly, the right to walk among his fellow-men, free, with the stains upon his character removed. He offered them for this once, and now he renews the offer after twelve years' imprisonment."

"In the meantime he has gone to work and printed bad money again!"

"He has not. I shall now tell you his story. Apply to it the simple rules of common sense and judge if he be not honest and fair! Garner, as I will call him, for that is the name under which this great government baptized him with a ceremony so cruel that it seems to belong to an age of barbarism rather than to the liberty-blessed enlightenment of the nineteenth century; Garner, soon after his escape, began life again with one supreme object—the finding of the man who betrayed him, innocent, to a living tomb. I have heard the story of his former life, and it went to my heart. It was obliged to be true; it is true! That betrayal cost him home, name, family, friends, inheritance, and,—wife. When he returned, after the twelve years of silence—all were gone—lost forever!"

The form of the speaker wavered a moment, but his flashing eyes still held their light bravely.

"The blow would have killed a dozen men; it made a man of him; a man without fear of life or death or aught that lies between. It made him as tender at heart as a young mother, in some respects; a tiger—worse, a hyena—in others. For if the man who ruined, who robbed his life of the possibilities of happiness and murdered his youth were dead and buried, he would tear open his grave with naked hands and scatter his bones to the beasts of the night!"

With a mighty effort he restrained his voice, the fury becoming too apparent, and with infinite pathos took up the story again.

"His sufferings touched my heart. I believed his story. I knew that in his trial he spoke God's holy truth if human lips ever spoke it, and that his sacrifice was as noble as ever man has witnessed.

"Chances, as he sought his destroyer, put him in possession of information valuable to the government. He

gave it through us. You received and acted upon it!"

"Is it possible?"

"I swear it! The reward, most of it, went to others. Again and again, and yet again, he served you—through us! Does that look as if your prisoner—your escaped convict—is an enemy to law and order?"

"No!"

"And he is ready to serve you again! He has printed no bills. That which lies before you on the table is the last of the original lot,—printed then only to sell the plates. That was true, too. He sent it through us to you to emphasize his case and to prove his innocence—in fact, to bring about this interview."

The General thought a moment in silence, his eyes fixed still upon the strange figure before him. Again he murmured:

"Magnificent! Magnificent!"

"There is one defect, my friend," he said, very gently, touched more deeply than he would have admitted to himself. "Garner could have shown his sincerity in a very simple way. He could have returned the plates at any time during the last four years. He offered to get them if restored freedom; when he secured his freedom it would have established his sincerity had he done so!"

Chilon shook his head, sadly.

"You have not allowed for human passion. With those plates gone from his control, he might have had no way to bring upon his betrayer the fate he himself suffered. It was his design to have the real criminal arrested with that bill and those plates in his possession. They would have been placed there. He has waited four years for the opportunity. In that time he has had the advantage of every power we possess; not a criminal of note in the great cities has been arrested but has been investigated by photograph or description. You are aware of the closeness of our watch, and can appreciate that some powerful reason has kept the man from making his appearance.

We are satisfied that he is dead or in some state or foreign prison."

"Do I understand that Garner has given up at last?"

"No. But we make you this proposition; hands off, and if in sixty days we do not deliver to you the real criminal in the old case we will deliver the plates. In the meantime, you may be assured that there will be no use made of the latter. For this we will ask that, quietly, a pardon be given our client. Is it unreasonable?"

"I think not. Still, I do not like the plates to be out."

"My dear sir, you cannot help that. And if the plates have remained unused during seventeen years, they are not likely to be put to work during the next sixty days."

"I will guarantee the pardon for the immediate delivery of the plates. That, with the services rendered"—Chilon quivered with sudden rage and excitement. The General had arisen with something like a threat upon his own face, and they met before the desk. They looked steadily into each other's eyes. By a supreme effort the visitor controlled himself.

"Sir," he said, gently, "you have asked my assistance and I have offered it free of cost because of my friendship for the man you call Carl Garner. If you decline the proposition I have made for him—little enough, God knows—I shall advise him to renew it and claim a $100,000 bonus! He is a friend to his country; do not make him an enemy!" The General stood silent a few moments, his eyes searching the face of his visitor. Then he very slowly extended his hand, saying:

"I agree to your terms, subject to ratification; and of this I will advise you in a few hours. Let me add for myself, my friend, that I believe the story of Carl Garner is true. He has nothing to fear from me during the sixty days he claims. And I take this occasion, Mr. Underhill, to personally thank you, and him, for your services to the

government—to express my admiration for you as a man of genius and courage. What is your address?"

"The same as before. I thank you, both for myself and Carl Garner, for your kind words and your belief in him. They will probably constitute the first that have reached him in many a year. They will teach him, I think, sir, that there are a few bright spots left in the world, a few hearts upon which light is still shining." The General held the hand of his visitor a moment more, flushed and looked down. Then he pressed it in silence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RAVENSWOOD.

Within the few hours, as promised, Chilon received a
ef note from the government's representative confirm-
; the contract that had been made, namely: Robert Un-
rhill and his principal were, within sixty days, to deliver
the government the original Carl Garner and plates
possible. Failing in that, they were to deliver the plates.
)r this, Carl Garner, as convicted, was to receive a
ırdon, with such public reparation as he might require.
For the first time in many a year Chilon walked forth a
ee man. He took the Southern Express an hour later.
Time had made great changes in the city of his youth.
ot only had ambitious buildings sprung into existence,
ut the craze for colored paints had swept away the dig-
ity of many old mansions, and the calm restfulness of the
road streets had fled before the whirring wheels of elec-
ic cars. It scarcely seemed to be the same city. He
alked the streets absolutely alone, meeting many famil-
r faces, grown older; missing more. No one knew him.
But his interest in life had not, as he tried to persuade
mself, narrowed down to Carl Garner. He could not,
patiently as he tried, repress a certain feeling of
gerness when he looked into the faces of the women
ho met him and gazed into the many carriages brought
ıt by the perfection of that May morning. It was with
feeling almost boyish, yet inexpressibly sad, that he
mporized openly, at last, and sought the neighborhood
the late Richard Marbeau's residence. He passed it
on the opposite side; flowers were in the windows,
tle children were riding their bicycles about the yard,
stout lady was clipping rose bushes, and an old man
ad his paper in a shady corner of the veranda. A post-
an was hurrying past, but stopped to answer a question.

"Marbeau? No, sir! No such family has lived there since I came on this route three years since. Colonel Marbeau lives seven miles out."

"Yes, I know. Thank you!" He passed on. What did it matter! She had gone away somewhere to educate her child. It was better so. But the beauty went out of the day. The voices of romping children, the sight of the fresh, southern faces in car and carriage wearied, palled upon him. He hurried to a stable and took a vehicle. He had not announced the day of his arrival. The bureau through which the request for assistance had reached him had merely written that Mr. Robert Underhill, who was traveling for health in the south and upon whose advice in many important matters they relied implicitly, would soon, at their request, call upon him. The letter also advised against any suggestions upon the part of Colonel Marbeau looking to compensation for this service, as Mr. Underhill was not in business as a detective, and rendered it as a matter of accommodation to them.

So Chilon returned home. The last time it had been as a fleeing criminal in the shadows of the woods and streams, unknown, and poor. This time he came openly, bearing the guarantee of his government and a name that was powerful.

Saddened and depressed though he was, he would not have been human had he not nevertheless felt the perfection of the day and the splendor of those skies. The air was full of sweets, and vibrant with the rapture of birds and the tuneful chorus of negroes in the cotton fields, whose threads of green stretched away into the dizzy distances. As he passed one of these groups, their hoes rising and falling with rhythmic precision, he caught the words of an old, familiar hymn:

> Hold the candle, Sister Mary,
> Hold the candle, my sister,
> Hold the candle till I look over Jordan.

The days are so long
And the people are so wicked
I don't want to stay here
No longer!

A memory came to him of the sweet face of his mother, et within a mass of wavy hair; and of the prayers he sed to say at her knees,—he and Celeste! How strange, ow far it all seemed! His way had been a tortuous one. hank God, she had fallen asleep out of sight of it all.

The song had faded in the distance. Looking back he aw the regular flash of the polished hoes, and knew that still went on.

Through the old, familiar archway of the gate at Ravnswood the vehicle rolled. It was there, when she came ome that day from school, the shy little convent girl, hat he had kissed her impulsively and said, "Welcome to avenswood!" To-day how was it?

"Drive on," he said, quickly, to the man with the lines; we are losing time."

And last of all there was the old sycamore, with its halfoncealed hollow. This time he turned his face away and round his teeth together with inward rage at his own eakness. The vehicle had stopped when he recovered is self-possession. Looking hurriedly, he saw the old, amiliar home, with the familiar figure of its owner tanding upon the porch awaiting him.

Chilon took occasion, before reaching the steps, to neasure the effects of time upon the man he was to meet. He was a little grayer, a little heavier, with just a slight ettling of the erect figure—that was all. There were he same bright eye and open face, the same easy dress nd courteous attention. He rose to his level with slow, leliberate steps, and they met. He felt the swift, searchng glance and noted the slight expression of bewilderment upon his uncle's face. He spoke first:

"Colonel Marbeau, I believe! I am Mr. Underhill." The next instant they were shaking hands and the Colonel was leading the way into the library. A girl of prob-

ably twelve or thirteen years of age was curled up in the great leather chair asleep over her books. Chilon was to receive many tests, but few would appeal to him more forcibly! It had been the favorite attitude of Lena from childhood up. Startled and deeply affected, fascinated, he paused before the beautiful picture. Colonel Marbeau noticed the action with surprise, and following the direction of the other's gaze saw, in the rather dimly-lighted room, the little figure. He smiled.

"Study, upon such mornings as these, comes peculiarly hard to a child, Mr. Underhill. You will have to excuse the young lady. Lena! Lena!" he continued, touching the smooth cheek of the sleeper; "jump up, my dear. See, here is a gentleman who wishes to meet you." In an instant the child was on her feet, looking upon the stranger from under long lashes that almost hid the loveliness of her dark, brown eyes.

"This is my granddaughter, Lena, Mr. Underhill; as fine a sleeper as ever sat in a chair. Eh, Lena? You were literally caught napping that time, weren't you?"

The child extended to the visitor her little hand.

"Yes, Grandpa! I hope Mr. Underhill will excuse me. I had so tired of study."

Chilon had passed his hand across his eyes for a second, almost blinded by the rush of blood to the head. He had discounted by imagining all scenes and trials that seemed possible, but not this vivid reproduction of a picture from the past. Face, figure, voice and manner; they were the same. Lena Marbeau was not dead.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" He vaguely realized that Colonel Marbeau was speaking—"you are ill—faint! Run, daughter, and bring Mr. Underhill a glass of water ——"

"A passing dizziness, only," said Chilon, smiling weakly. "The day is a little warm for a northerner. And the long ride——"

"Naturally. I beg that you will be seated, sir. Take

this chair near the window. And here is a fan of the old kind. Lena, this way, dear. And, Mr. Underhill"—as Chilon surrendered and accepted the silver dipper—"I will guarantee, sir, that you have never had such a draught! It comes from the best of springs!"

"It is certainly refreshing," said Chilon, handing back the dipper. "It has been many years since I read poetry—life for us, Colonel, has but little poetry—but just now two lines come out of my youth—I forget even the author, but it matters not—

"'A sweeter draught from fairer hands was never quaffed!'"

"Well said!" exclaimed his host, "and well chosen!" Lena looked at them with her grave, questioning eyes, and bowed in embarrassment.

"This is your first visit south, Mr. Underhill?"

"Oh, no! I have occasionally passed through the southern states. But it has been some years since I was last in this section."

"Gentlemen of your profession—but I forget; you are not, I believe, connected with any——"

"Detective system? None. I have no profession."

Colonel Marbeau looked a little bewildered. He regarded the now calm and collected man before him with deep interest.

"No profession; but yet——" Chilon had anticipated this.

"But yet I have friends who make it their business to unravel mysteries. I have called upon you at the request of one of them. I have never before left my office for a consultation with any one; but it suits me to spend a few weeks in the south."

"That is fortunate," said the Colonel, warmly. "I beg that you will honor us with your company as long as you feel disposed. We have a good country here, and just enough of the old south to make it worth while for a visitor who feels interested to study our institutions. The

shooting season is passed, but our fishing is good. Unfortunately, I am obliged to take care of my eyes just now, or I might offer personally to accompany you. Some of my wounds are a little troublesome, too."

"You are very kind, Colonel. I shall not trouble you to that extent; but if a few days, a week, perhaps, would not inconvenience you——"

"Why, dear me, nothing could make me happier. And in that time we may discuss our business at leisure. Sad business, it is, Mr. Underhill, sad business!"

"Ah, indeed. Unfortunately, I hear but little else, Colonel."

"I suppose so. I regret to add to your store of unpleasant experiences. But yet this has only sad features; it is entirely within the family, sir, and of course nothing —criminal."

"That is fortunate, indeed."

"It is a case of disappearance, sir, only; we will go over it after a while. I will not mar such a day as this;—oh, my child, my child!" as Lena entered with a little silver waiter and two golden mint juleps; "you will make a toper of your grandfather yet. Now, Mr. Underhill, loyal as I am to the old spring at the foot of the hill, I am bound to admit that at 11:30 a. m. a mint julep, based upon it, is an improvement."

"I commend your judgment," said Chilon, "and will break a rule in honor of our fair waitress, and—the name of your place is——"

"Ravenswood!"

"Of Ravenswood!"

"That drink," said the Colonel, nodding, well pleased and holding the goblet aloft, "would make any man a bimetallist. Behold, sir, how the arctic silver is blended with the liquid gold! Fresh from the mint, it is the best circulating medium that I know of."

"Excellent, Colonel, excellent! You southerners know how to say such things. You spoke of a disappearance

a few moments ago," Chilon continued, lifting his lips from his glass at length and speaking carelessly—"a child was it?"

"No. A nephew of mine; seventeen years ago. The circumstances were extremely distressing."

"Ah! He bore your family name?"

"Yes; the only son of a dead brother. Chilon was his name. Chilon Marbeau."

The visitor lifted his glass and finished his drink in silence.

"You spoke of him as though he were very young, Colonel; was he married?"

"Well—yes. But we will go into it all after awhile."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOST CHORDS.

It was not a matter for surprise that Colonel Marbeau did not recognize his nephew in Robert Underhill. The changes that seventeen years had wrought would have been sufficient to confuse any memory; but these, added to the circumstances of his return, rendered the disguise complete. In two respects, however, there had been none; the tone of voice was, though fuller and deeper, the same. A man may change his inflection, his name, his manner of speech, his voice tunes—for the simplest expression used in speech is a species of song—but his tone, once established, unless affected by accident, is ever the same. He thinks in words, and his own ego is the sound of his voice. Age scars the face with wrinkles, alters the angles, whitens the hair and bends the figure; nay, it even adds quavers to the voice and changes its pitch. To the man himself there is no change in the tone.

Chilon, for a long time, started at the sound of his own voice at Ravenswood. He could not understand how anything so natural was not recognized by every one who had known him.

The other point in which he had not suffered change was the eye ray, the remarkable light that darted from his pupils. He did not realize this, because no eye can be fully conscious of its own brightness, even with a mirror to assist. It cannot reflect a ray less bright than that which illuminates it.

So it was his eye and voice carried with them some vague suggestion that Colonel Marbeau could not interpret, disarmed as he was whenever he contemplated the cold, white face turned toward his. There was no ringing laugh, no ready smile, nor nervous rush of words to carry on the thought until Chilon came back to memory;

only that white face with gray ringlets curved along its brow; and a man of deliberate movements and impassable dignity.

He released his guest at high noon; habit is a lord with men nearing sixty, and while Chilon accepted the suggestion and strolled out into the open, the Colonel laid a fan over his face and yielded to habit and the hour.

Chilon observed the little girl in the garden, lovingly lifting and fondling the splendid roses there. During the interview within doors he had been haunted by a vague fear. What if Lena Marbeau were, after all, at Ravenswood! He had tried himself and knew now that surrounded as he was by so many memories, he was weak. He eagerly embraced the opportunity presented. Unaccustomed to children though he had been, there was yet something about him that impressed this child upon their first meeting. Perhaps they hear first of all the note of suffering.

He went toward her slowly, a rare smile upon his face.

"May I not have a rose?" he said.

"Certainly, sir!" without a change of expression she laid her hand upon a Devoniensis; and then, with a gravity equal to his own, "would you like a crimson one?" So had the other stood, her hand upon a crimson rose, when he gazed down from yonder window; and, startled by the picture, he looked up suddenly.

Was there a face at that window, too?

"I cannot," he whispered. "I cannot endure it." He let the little lady pin the rose upon his lapel, a sudden agony crushing his heart as he saw her white hands there, and the great, brown, questioning eyes lifted to his again.

"Thank you, my child; you are very kind," he whispered; "very, very kind!" He laid his hands upon her curls reverently. "What beautiful hair you have. Was your mamma's like this, soft and curly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you—have to leave her when you—come to visit grandfather at Ravenswood?"

"I never talk about mamma, sir. Grandfather does not wish me to."

"Never talk about mamma! She is not dead, child! not dead!"

"No, sir."

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, and seeing her face lifted and eyes filled with sudden tears, he added, "for your sake! She is your best friend. Many a poor girl and many a poor boy might have been spared untold misery if—God had spared their mothers. So it seems to us!"

"Papa is dead," she said, gravely. "He was killed by a tramp in the house yonder!"

Chilon stood as though carved of stone. He lifted his hands from the orphan's head gently. He had forgotten for the moment in the rush and pressure of other memories. It was a desecration, an insult to her purity, her loyalty, to let her stand there in ignorance, with the hand of his murderer upon her head. He would defend her against himself.

And yet was he a murderer! Were words spoken in the agony of his wrong and ruin, words which were but the ebullition of his wrath, entered up against him? Had he, in cold blood, met Richard Marbeau face to face, unarmed or armed, would he have deliberately sought his life? He would not. And was he guilty when the act was committed in the insanity of fever? No! Fate had made him a blind executioner. He was not a murderer. No one had ever called him that. No one knew his act! So he reasoned.

"He did not mean to kill him, though," she said. "Papa would not let him get away. The man was poor and probably starving in despair, and papa tried to shoot him. If he had been caught he would have had to go to prison,

oh! so many years. And so I pray to God that he will forgive him and make him good!"

Chilon's hand trembled as he placed it again upon the little head.

"Who taught you that?" he whispered.

She did not reply. "God bless her, whoever she was; God bless her!"

She stood with eyes cast down, her long, dark lashes upon her fair cheek, a picture that would never have wearied him. Her fingers, in her embarrassment, were stripping an unplucked rose, the crimson petals falling at her feet.

"Have you a little girl?" she asked presently.

He shook his head.

"Neither wife nor child—on earth or in heaven."

There was silence a moment, her brown eyes searching his face in wonder.

"I am sorry," she said simply. "You must sometimes be lonely. Grandfather says he is lonely when I am away."

He had turned aside a moment and was watching a great black and yellow butterfly balancing himself upon a blossom. How long it seemed since even that little vision had blessed his eyes. Seeing his interest, she joined him.

"That is the papilio turnus. Chilon knows all about him—he knows all about everything."

"Chilon!" The name escaped him unconsciously—why—what a strange name! And who is Chilon, my child?"

"Oh, Chilon is my cousin."

"Your cousin!"

"Yes. Aunt Celeste Aubren is his mother. I think you would like Chilon; he is so wise. I think you must be wise too, sir; you look like Chilon!" Her face brightened and for the first time he saw her smile. Her eyes were fixed on something beyond him. "Here

he comes now." Slowly, as though fearing another shock, and yet prepared, the man turned his head and saw coming toward them a boy of about fifteen. He caught almost every detail of his appearance in one glance. Tall and slender, straight as an arrow, clad in knickerbockers and a creamy muslin shirt, a scarlet handkerchief knotted at the throat and on his head a slanting straw hat, the youth presented a striking appearance. The face was better revealed as he came nearer, with a quick nervous movement that marked the existence of some absorbing motive. But as the boy's face grew clearer by near approach, the man shrank back a little. In the rather delicate, but not diminutive features, the poise of head, the set of mouth, something familiar cried out from the past. And when the clear, bright brown eyes met his and seemed to search his soul, and the voice in response to Lena's introduction greeted him in low, sweet tones, he realizezd that the Chilon of a generation past confronted him.

He controlled himself by a supreme effort and extended his hand. What he intended to say he did not know. What he did say, was:

"I am glad to meet you, my boy. Little—Lena has been telling me of you." The two children exchanged glances. He saw then a difference, a wide difference between the phantom of the past the meeting had called up, and this new personification. The momentary excitement gone, the boy's face resumed what was, evidently, its habitual expression, a thoughtfulness that was almost sadness. The light, too, sank far away into his eyes. He shrank perceptibly toward the girl.

"Chilon sees so few strangers," she said in explanation; and then quite as a matter of course she took his hand.

"I think I am keeping you from play," said the man. "I would not wish to do that."

"Chilon has come to practice his music," said the girl quickly.

"Music!"

"Yes, sir! He is learning the organ from me."

"And of course you are a musician, too, then."

"I only play a little, but I know enough to teach him. I have been taught ever since I was a baby. We practice together. Do you play?"

"Yes," he said, softly, "sometimes." The children's faces brightened with interest.

"The organ?"

"Yes." They were never strangers again. They moved nearer to him, excitement at once showing in the boy's eyes. The little girl looked wistfully into his face, saying:

"Would you mind playing a little for us? So few people play who come." He found himself charmed and interested. And the organ stood in the room where the plates were hidden.

"Would I? No, indeed. But Grandfather is taking his nap."

"Oh, we shall not disturb him. The organ is down in the parlor, and we can shut the door. Besides, Grandfather dearly loves the organ. He says it always soothes him."

Chilon took a hand of each and went in doors. The old-fashioned southern parlor with its mohair mahogany furniture, solemn portraits and heavy hangings lost its gloom on this occasion. For the costly vases had been filled with roses and the sunlight was, in defiance of an important canon of southern civilization, pouring a flood of light into the crimson counterfeits upon the carpeted floor. The tall pipe organ was thrown open, and as one coming home again, Chilon seated himself upon the familiar bench and let his hands stray over the keys in search of a melody suited to his mood. Gradually the notes arranged themselves and he found himself playing that sadly beautiful fancy of Sullivan's, "The Lost Chord." His lips framed no words, but in his heart the poem grew with the melody. The exquisite conception, reproduced

by one born of harmony and possessed of rare technique, filled the room and stole forth into the faultless day, almost a living spirit. Player and listeners were lost to the hour and the situation, and when the pipes sang almost the words of the closing lines:

> It may be that somewhere in heaven
> I shall hear that chord again—

Chilon found his eyes moist. No sound broke the silence that succeeded the close. After a few moments he remembered and looked upon his audience. Lena's womanly face was lit with a strange, sweet light, and with lips half parted, she was regarding him, startled and entranced. But the boy, his figure rigid from some powerful emotion, sat with his eyes half closed and tears upon his cheeks. The little girl turned quickly and saw them. Dropping to her knees, she took his hands in hers.

"Chilon, Chilon," she said, "look up, dear. It is I, Lena!" He lifted his face almost in awe, and fixed his luminous eyes upon those of the player. What message, what signal, had passed from man to boy? We do not know; the next century will understand. Rising, he came to the side of the musician and laid his arms about him.

"I love you," he said, and Lena, her own eyes dim with tears, came too, and stood by them, with wistful face uplifted.

In the doorway, until then unobserved, was Colonel Marbeau, his martial figure erect, and a look of intense interest upon his face. For a few moments only he remained silent, contemplating the little group.

"You are a performer, Mr. Underhill, of no small skill. I am not a musician, but all Marbeaus are born with a keen appreciation of music. It makes us all impractical, they say, but that matters little. Impractical people sow the seeds of progress if they never reap."

"Sometimes they reap, Colonel, and a sad harvest it is. This truth has been forced upon me many times, but I

agree with you. These young people, by your test, are true Marbeaus, I perceive; they have music in them!" He placed an arm around each and drew them closer.

Lena's gift is her voice. I think with training it will be above the ordinary. Daughter, sing one of your little songs for Mr. Underhill."

"Certainly, Grandfather. Which one?"

"Any will do. I want Mr. Underhill to tell me what he thinks of your voice." She thought a moment, and then sang in a clear, soft-toned soprano, exquisitely modulated:

Somewhere tonight, I know that thou art weary,
A shadow falls upon my heart,
And thou art thinking of me only,
Withdrawn from thy dear friends apart,
Striving with the fervor of thy love to be
At home, at home again with me.

Before the dying coals I see thee kneeling
While twilight deepens in thy silent room,
And darkness from thy wistful face is stealing
All but the whiteness of its bloom.
Oh, love, close ear and eye, that thou mayst hear and see,
Open thy arms, I come to thee!

The beautiful melody died away, and silence, strange and awkward, followed. The boy stood looking down, his chest rising and falling rapidly. The man at the organ sat with his hands resting upon the keys, his head bent forward. He had not played a note.

"What a strange, sad song," he said gently, "and how it suits her voice!"

"It is a strange, sad song, too sad for a day like this. Why she should have chosen it I can't imagine. It was written by the Chilon Marbeau of whom we were speaking. But what of her voice, Mr. Underhill?"

"She might win fame and fortune, sir, if she would. She is a born singer."

"Thank you, sir. But a woman's fame is broad enough when it fills the circle of her friends; and as for fortune, why I will attend to that." And with this slight discord the old gentleman whirled about and sought his den.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

NEAR TO NATURE'S HEART.

The southern country dinner is a noon-day affair and not ceremonious. Colonel Marbeau brought forth some excellent cigars after the meal.

"Mr. Underhill, take your choice; finish the day with the children out of doors, or stay here and be bored by an old man. However, I will decide for you since I see that you have a fondness for the little folks and they for you. Lena shall show you about and to-morrow we may discuss our matters. A souvenir or two of Virginia campaigns, in the shape of bullets in my left hip and thigh, compel me to keep within reach of the house here. Where is Chilon, daughter?"

"In the library!" The boy was found lying face down upon the floor before the bookcase, absorbed in an illustrated volume of natural history, too large to be handled easily. He came willingly and stood silent by Lena's side while plans were discussed.

"I think," said the girl. "Chilon is most interested to-day in insects and botany."

"Then," said the guest, quickly yielding to the superior claim, "we will follow him!"

Their way led by the mill, whose whirring rocks were adding a monotonous note to the hour. The boy was soon separated from them, oblivious to everything else, in his occupation; the others found a shady log near the water and the visitor took from her hands Lena's sketch book.

"I suppose I may look," he said with deference.

"You are an artist!" she replied, quickly.

"Why do you think so?" She reflected a moment:

"You would not have asked if you were not. You

would have just looked. So my teacher once told a gentleman!"

"A keen observation. You are right; it is the untaught person who opens an artist's book without permission—but I am still waiting."

"You may look," she said, smiling, "I don't think you will criticize." The pictures were crude, but bold, the points of view well chosen and perspective good. He noted these points quickly. "I will return your compliment," he said, "you are an artist."

"Why do you think so?" and then, "You see I have returned your question, Mr. Underhill."

"Well, the effect is what you seem to seek, rather than mere detail; and young as you are, it shows in your work. I think, my child, you should be classed as a juvenile impressionist. The wind in these bushes along the mill dam is very apparent, and this pigeon, while he violates all the canons of pigeonhood as accepted, is evidently trying to alight after a long flight." Her face flushed a little, and she looked up from under her dark lashes with embarrassment.

"I am afraid you are laughing at me, sir."

"Laughing? No, indeed. You have more to start with my child than many artists acquire in half a lifetime. Some ancestor has passed his genius to you. You must now learn to use your hand. Sit still on your end of the log and let me see if I have forgotten." Rapidly he sketched the little figure in profile, the background a stretch of smooth water with the old mill and deep green of the woods beyond. The heavy shadows gave him chance for strong contrasts. The likeness was easy; he but copied from within. The child's grave face and clustering curls, her hat hanging loosely, and her hands clasped carelessly in her lap, formed an exquisitely beautiful picture. When he had finished he watched her a moment, with inexpressible sadness. She brightened at once at sight of the picture.

"And is that of me?" she asked in wonder. "How beautifully it is drawn, and how quickly! Oh! Why, sir, I have a picture in a scrap book!——" She stopped abruptly. But she did not need to finish the sentence. A shadow fell upon the man's face. He understood and was greatly disturbed.

"I think then I shall let you give me this one," he said, quickly.

"Oh, do you want it, sir?—I—; the other is not mine, you know!"

"Then keep it child, I can draw another from memory." After all what did it matter. Chilon, the boy, came up then.

"See, Lena, I've got him at last. Not a leg broken!" He held a spider between thumb and finger, the black legs of the little beast spreading two inches in every direction, his mandibles clicking ominously. She drew back in alarm.

"Take care, my son, that is an ugly looking customer," said her companion.

"Not poisonous," said the boy simply. "He belongs to the riparians. It is hard to get one perfect; their legs drop off like dead leaves from a tree." In a little perforated box that he drew from his pocket, was heard a faint buzzing. The box was attached to a larger one by a wire in the bottom. Placing the open end of this one to his ear the boy listened intently, a pleased expression upon his thoughtful face.

"There is an ichneumon fly in there."

"Dirt-dauber," said Lena, seeing their guest's puzzled expression.

"He builds his little mud nests under the mill. The note he makes with his wings is the same as the note made by the mill."

"True," said the man, taking the cup and listening. "Many octaves above, but the same note."

"He also builds up in our garret and at night when the

wind hums up there, it makes the same note. Would you say that they go to the garret and the mill because they like the sound, or do they take their note from the place they build in?"

"I am not a scientist," said the man, smiling, and speaking to Lena, "so you see you children have me at a disadvantage at last. What do you think, my boy?"

"I think that their wings vibrate more easily when they vibrate with the air around them."

"Maybe so; but I have a suspicion that your friend, the dirt-dauber, as Lena calls him, frequents garrets and mills because the spiders do. They are, as you probably know, mortal enemies. The fly catches the spider, paralyzes him by stinging back of the head, and tucks him away in the little dirt nest where he puts an egg. The warmth of the spider helps to hatch the egg and then the little grub feeds upon him. Am I right? That is my recollection, for I used to watch them when I was a little boy."

"Yes," said the child positively, "that is what the books say; but he does not sting the spider. He tickles him until he is asleep. All the family can be tickled to sleep, from the crab down to the wood-tick. I will find a tick sometime and show you. Try these big spiders and you will see them roll up and sleep. I have tried them."

"Chilon is finding out the note that every flying insect makes," said Lena, her eyes following her playmate as he passed on. "We try them with the organ. But he can tell nearly always from memory. He says that if we could hear better—hear well enough to find one of these insects a hundred yards away, there would be so much noise in the world people would have to talk by signs." The elder Chilon shook his head.

"Where does he get such ideas? It would be better for him to play more and let brain work alone."

"Oh, Chilon never plays. He will not ride, or swim, or row; I wish he would. Sometimes he worries me," said the little woman. "He not only hears insects' wings, but

he hears voices around him when I can't. He says it is because he can hear better than I can; that there is something in him that answers to vibrations too fine for me. Do you believe that, sir?"

"It may be true," said Chilon. "I am sure he must believe it."

"Yes, indeed. He could not tell a falsehood. Why, sometimes when it is lightning he declares that he hears it or feels it, he doesn't know which. You saw how he watched you this morning? He told me after you left the parlor that he had heard your voice somewhere many and many a time. But that couldn't be, I know. He said, too, that when I was singing this morning, he kept thinking about a girl who looked like me but wasn't, and believed that Mr. Underhill was thinking of the same girl. He is very strange sometimes, but he is good and loves me. Sometimes he calls me little sister. I think that I must understand him better than anybody. Aunt Celeste never did understand him, but she loves him very much." So the wise little tongue discoursed upon its favorite topic:—Chilon. She did not notice that the man by her side was startled and almost breathless for an instant.

"Hasn't Chilon been away to school yet?"

"Oh, no, sir! Aunt Celeste's grandfather has been teaching him until this year, when he died. And, oh, he taught him everything!—all about the gods and goddesses of the old times—you know; and Chilon says they were all real. It wasn't any trouble to teach Chilon; he says he came into the world educated and all they had to do was to remind him of what he had forgotten. Isn't that a funny idea?"

"Very. The poor little fellow seems very grave for one so young."

"Oh, he is not now. But sometimes he is so sad; and if I did not sing to him, I don't know what would become of him. He goes off in the woods and fields and stays all day, sometimes lying upon his back and watching the

clouds, and sometimes watching them in the lake. He sometimes is lonely in the night and can't sleep, and then he gets out quietly and comes over here, but not to come in. A lamp burns all night in one of the rooms upstairs;—did you speak?"

"No,—no, my child! You were saying——!"

"He says he doesn't feel lonely when he can see that light, and after awhile he goes back home and sleeps."

"Strange! Strange!"

"And I feel so sorry for Chilon. Sometimes, before I go to bed, I stand at the window and sing a song, because my singing always quiets him, and I think maybe he will hear me and go home to sleep. Please don't tell anyone about Chilon. I don't know why I told you; but if they found it out over home his mother might make him promise her to stay there and that would make him more unhappy; for Chilon never breaks a promise."

"You may trust me. I will not tell! But does he come here often, now?—in the day time?"

"Yes, sir. Grandfather lets him come to get books and study music with me. I think he is more interested in studying—vibration than the music itself. Do you remember how many vibrations one can hear;—isn't it thirty-six thousand to the second? Chilon told me but I have forgotten."

"Something like that, I believe."

"Well, Chilon says, and he knows, that after we lose the vibrations at thirty-six thousand we never know anything more about them until they come so fast they form light,—many hundred millions to the second; and between the last sound we can hear and the first light we can see with our ears and eyes, is the unknown world. If we could hear all the way up or see all the way down we would know everything. He can hear a great many, —twice as many vibrations as I can; and so he says many things come to him that no one else knows; only he isn't able to understand them yet."

"You will be educated on a queer line if you stick to Chilon, my dear. He is a dreamer. It will be hard for him when he must put aside all these ideas and face the world. I wonder if he ever thinks of that!"

"No, sir. Chilon hasn't ever been further than the city and says that he will never go back there again. It's too noisy for him.

"I don't know what will become of the little fellow. His future is not apt to be a bright one." Chilon came up at that moment and looked questioningly into their faces.

"I think I must be going," he said finally. Lena took his hand.

"We were only saying nice things of you, Chilon, dear."

"Come and tell me about vibration, my boy," said the elder Chilon; "perhaps I may interest you." The boy nodded and lifting his hat, turned away. But the next instant he was back again.

"Will you say that again?" he asked earnestly, "just as you said it before?" The man smiling, repeated the sentence. The boy looked long and steadily into his face, shook his head slowly and disappeared in the wood.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"LOOKING BACKWARD."

The full moon rose grandly, its white light striking across the corner of the veranda where the chairs of the gentlemen had been placed. Little Lena came to them and leaned lightly upon Colonel Marbeau's shoulder as he smoked and listened to the stranger who spoke upon the topics of the day. The latter possessed for her a singular fascination, and ever as he turned his gaze upon her, standing in the splendor of the moon, he found her eyes resting upon him. But when 9 o'clock came she went away with a kiss for one and a courtesy for the other of the two men. Chilon noticed, however, that instead of entering the house at once she paused and stood gazing thoughtfully into the shadowy depths of the woods. If she listened for any unusual sound she apparently heard none. Only the monotonous thump of the water-ram, the drone of the falls and the shrill chorus of the crickets came to them.

When she had gone within, silence fell upon the little group. One of the two was busy with memories, the other revolving in mind the case which he wished to present.

Chilon spoke first, his train of thoughts having led up to the same subject.

"I am afraid, Colonel, you are going to find it difficult to give me just such a statement concerning your nephew as I may wish. Few people possess the power of clearly stating orally a case and presenting all the features of it in proper order, and fewer still possess the mind to hold and reproduce it without confusion. In the little time that I have been enabled to think upon this subject it has occurred to me that I shall need a calm, dispassionate history in writing, and I believe you will prefer to give it to

me that way, when you have considered all the circumstances well."

"I like your idea, sir. It will give me a better opportunity, as you say. And, besides, I wish just such a history preserved. I have, in view of the uncertainty which attends the fate of my nephew, made notes which will be of use."

"I trust, then, that you will make it as full as possible. Much that you may consider useless might be valuable to one who has to create in mind a person and determine whither his controlling characteristics have led him. There is but one place to begin, and that is the beginning; and there is involved in this disappearance not only acquired mental and moral characteristics, but inherited ones. Heredity has much to do with us; the disaster, mortification, or wounded pride that one man would forget in a month would last another a lifetime. Your family is of French extraction? The name would so indicate."

"Yes. The first of the name came to this country, about the middle of the eighteenth century, under peculiar circumstances. Do you know the history of the Saltzburgers? I presume not. It was a colony of very remarkable people who came to this state from Austria. Persecuted for religion's sake, exiled, they made their way through Germany to England, and thence to Georgia. Their moral strength, their devotion to each other, their faith in each other, were almost unparalleled. They are still in this state a distinct people, blindly devoted to each other, and fearless in defense of principles and privileges. Religious as they were, and still are, they never made an enemy of a friend, nor a friend of an enemy——"

"So that if your family has a Saltzburger strain, we may expect to find something of these characteristics in this generation?"

The Colonel was silent a moment.

"That had not occurred to me directly, but I believe the characteristics remain."

"But your name is French?"

"It was this way: Our ancestor was a Huguenot refugee in Germany when these people were fleeing from persecution. Gay, highborn and careless, he was just such a man as would dazzle and captivate a young woman austerely raised. He met his fate in Lena Zegler. By chance he was enabled to protect her from insult and thus gained an acquaintance. She, modest as she was beautiful, and beautiful beyond comparison, enslaved his fancy. He was a younger son, with no home nor any ties to bind him. Parting he found impossible, and so he cast in his lot with the Austrians and came to Georgia. His services gained him the respect and gratitude of the colonists and his bride.

"But it was not long before he found himself out of harmony with the life about him, for nothing could present a greater contrast than a noble Frenchman and an Austrian peasant. Family changes abroad put him in better financial condition. He went back to France, children were born, and when he came here again he took up city life. His children laid the foundation of this home."

"So, then again, if heredity controls, the Marbeaus are restless and eccentric, with devoted and beautiful women in all generations, and men light-hearted or top-heavy as the French or Austrian predominates."

"A novel presentation," said Colonel Marbeau, "but not bad. Our family record, now unfortunately mislaid, shows this to be true. But we have had Austrian reinforcement more than once, and the latest was the mother of the young man who is gone—Chilon Marbeau, son of my brother Francis."

"Indeed!"

"The world never knew a grander woman than the wife of Francis." The old man bowed his head as if in rever-

ence to some visions he beheld. "She made her choice—it was Francis or me. She chose the better of the two. Francis fell at Gettysburg. She did not long survive."

The silence was at length broken by the guest.

"You say this Chilon was a young man?"

"Twenty, I think. And it was seventeen years ago that he left us."

"You believe him dead?"

"I do. But circumstances force me now to make an effort to find him."

"Circumstances?"

"Which I may not relate. They can have no bearing upon the case that would affect the search."

"I regret your position in this matter very much," said Chilon after a pause. "The very circumstances to which you refer might furnish the clue we need. But I appreciate your difficulty; and, after all, the failure affects you most, if fail we must."

"The circumstances cannot be considered," said the other quietly. "They are simply too painful—besides, they involve——"

Chilon waited, but the sentence was never finished.

"I see now," he said, "that my suggestion was a good one. The case has many roots and branches. Give it to me in writing. With this to study upon, I may advise you by letter if I am called away. I only request that you give me every detail that you feel at liberty to use, in connection with your nephew's life, and the reason for this search. In other words, give me his life story and the lives of those with whom he was thrown—their former and after history." Colonel Marbeau nodded without speaking. But, after reflection, he said:

"If in this, Mr. Underhill, I write my own history to some extent, you will please bear in mind that Charles Marbeau of the present and of the past, are two different men. Haunted by the sorrows and tragedies of my life, I have studied all the causes of my affliction, and from the

people about me I have secured the missing links of the story. My errors have been great, but my sorrows are greater." His hearer turned away his face quickly.

"I regret, almost, sir, that I have placed this task upon you."

"Say no more. It will, in many respects, be a satisfaction for me to write this story. I may require several days, but you will not lose in the end. You said that insomnia and the habit of night work had made you an inconvenient guest, and so with your convenience in view I have had you assigned to the room in the rear of the parlor. It opens on the side veranda and will afford you perfect freedom. And there is the parlor, with the organ; Lena and the woods. She is young, but will interest you; and you have won her, already. Now, my health depends upon a certain amount of sleep—and if you will excuse me——"

"Why, certainly. Good night, sir!"

"Good night, and pleasant dreams, Mr. Underhill. If you wish to remain up why the front door is not often closed. And if you desire music, you will disturb no one. Music is the Marbeau anodyne. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DREAMS THAT COME.

Chilon sat long after his uncle had retired. Although his approach to his new situation had been deliberate and gradual, now that the events of the few days that had intervened since his departure from New York were behind him, he seemed only to have just stepped from his hotel into sacred memories. One figure was gone, however, the glory of them all. And he, the new Chilon, did not seem to belong there. He was an intruder, an interloper.

As he sat in thought he heard in the distance some simple melody and thought of little Lena and her strange story. Obeying an impulse, he went forth into the woods and stood where he might view that window once so eagerly watched four years before. She was there, the girl, singing, while in the window upon her right a lamp was burning. It was so real, so vivid a reproduction, he could scarcely refrain from crying aloud to the singer. In the moonlight the figure of the girl seemed womanly, and in the still night her voice was a woman's indeed. The song, the tones, the scene, overcame him. He almost ran from the spot. But once he paused to listen; surely, no child's voice possessed that strength and compass? None but a woman who had lived and loved could produce those tones? He shook his head and resolutely passed from the place out of sound of the singer.

But Chilon, in yielding once to his heart, had lost self control. He no longer sought to avoid thoughts of the past. By the lakeside, that night, upon its glassy surface, in the little boat, and in the dark avenues so well known to his wandering feet, he gave himself up to memory and to grief. It was the last time, perhaps. He did not care; each spot had its memory; it was like a resurrection for him to be there. Where the swinging muscadines fell

in festoons, he stood and dreamed of the summer when they climbed and swung among them. Where the grassy log ran out and sank its moss in the waters, he bent his head in anguish; the picture he had drawn of her was clear cut within his brain. By the dank, dark margins where grow the azaleas and the jessamine he saw her covered and wreathed with nature's spring triumphs, and in the silvery moonlit waters her face smiled up into his own; the hour was full of bitter sweets. Over all hung the remembrance of his eternal loss!

Chance brought him near to the old sycamore, their postoffice, and there, unable to throw off his fantasies or longer command himself, he felt the tears rise up and creep upon his cheeks. It was yesterday, only, that he found there her little letters—her pledges of love and affection. Would she ever come again? Would she?

Nervous, depressed and trembling, he saw through the mist in his eyes a vision so real, so life-like, that he almost cried aloud. A woman, dressed in some light fabric that half revealed and half concealed her girlish form, stood by the hollow tree and, looking about cautiously, thrust her hand within. For a time she waited, in deep thought, apparently, and then began slowly to retreat into the dark recesses behind her. At this moment, so it seemed, a slender boy came and, touching the woman's arm, looked into her eyes. She bent and kissed his forehead, and, with her arm about him, slowly disappeared.

Chilon found himself standing with both hands grasping a small sapling, his face deluged with perspiration. He had not the slightest superstition. He accepted the scene as the evidence of a brain disordered. Long brooding had achieved his destruction. The next phenomenon would be paresis. Life would end for him in a hospital or private retreat among strangers. But his work was not done. Resolutely, revived by this remembrance, he threw off his mood and returned to the house.

But Chilon was not to escape so easily. As he placed

his foot upon the gravel walk, the figure of the woman glided across the veranda and disappeared through a parlor window.

In his room he spent hours contemplating his new peril. At length, he slept, awakening with a start, thrilled by that singular sensation which the presence of another person in a darkened room produces upon sensitive nerves. Again he beheld the same figure. This time it passed from his window and as, with bursting veins, he followed, he saw it vanish again within the parlor. He slept no more that night. The warning of the old voodoo returned—"dreams will come; some of them won't go." No further visions came that night, but once he fancied that he heard again, somewhere above him, the sound of the girl's voice lifted in song. He had, however, ceased to trust his senses.

As Chilon lay oppressed by his thoughts and the new fear upon his mind, he was sensible of a keen regret that he had ever given his consent to make the experiment. He had not been equal to the task set for himself. His old life with its passions and sentiment was not dead.

But could he retreat? Yes, fortunately, he had asked for the Colonel's statement in writing. He would have with it the history of his people, and perhaps all the mysteries unfolded. He might plead a telegraphic summons and go. He felt that it was beyond his philosophy to endure another night in that house, and disguise it as he might, there was within him a great disappointment, although the object of his coming had not been as yet even sought. The plates!

Chilon aroused himself. The thought was a clarion call to duty, or revenge. He passed into the hall and upstairs to the old ball room. The door was locked. As he stood dismayed and perplexed, the swish of a woman's garment passed him and a slight breath of air fanned his cheek. Impulsively, he stretched out his hand and touched someone, holding on until two hands deliber-

ly, and, it seemed to him, with resistless strength, un-
his fingers' clasp. When he caught madly again at
object, nothing but air was there. Footsteps, light
ck footsteps, fled down the hall, and a low, sweet laugh
ıted back.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GHOSTS OF RAVENSWOOD.

Chilon escaped from the house at early dawn and by a plunge in the lake restored to his nerves their accustomed steadiness. He returned for breakfast, and, early as it was, found Colonel Marbeau engaged upon his writing. The elder gentleman, stimulated by the circumstances surrounding him, threw himself with all the ardor of an excitable temperament into the recital of the romance that had involved so many of his family, and, true to his agreement, sought to let no detail escape him. Family pride with him, as with many men late in life, was almost a weakness, and brooding over the story of his household had prepared him for a volume. Early after the morning meal he excused himself and left his guest to his own devices. Lena came to the rescue, and the two soon drifted into the parlor, where, behind closed doors, he drew from the organ such music as the girl had but rarely heard. He tempted her to sing her little ballads, and once even added his tenor. This was in their last song, "My Lady's Bower," and when the sweet strains died away, they turned to find the boy, Chilon, leaning against the window frame thoughtfully listening to them. Aroused, he fixed upon the face of the musician a sad, penetrating gaze. The boy's mood conquered the other's; the man soon realized that it was the highest expression of the conversational art to furnish entertainment for such a nature, and found himself silent. The little fellow spoke at length.

"We have met before, haven't we?"

"Never, until yesterday. That is, not in this life at least," said the other, smiling.

"Then in some other," replied the boy, conclusively.

"You are a theosophist, then, my little friend—a reincarnationist."

"We have met many times before; we will meet again, perhaps. In some way, I know that we have been friends once; but where, I can't remember." There was no hesitation in this. It seemed to the man cruel to disturb such faith in a theory. But the child's next remark was startling. "Why are you unhappy, Mr. Underhill?"

"Why should you think me unhappy?"

"Because music changes your look."

"Chilon is that way," said Lena, in explanation. "I call them music-shadows, for when I sing to him, his eyes grow dark and beautiful. They are lighter when he is alone and thinking."

"And so does yours change," said the boy to the stranger. "They are light and like the winter sky; but when you have been singing and playing as you were just now, they are dark and almost brown."

"Did you notice such a change?" said the startled man, turning to Lena. "How are they now?"

"Yes, sir. But they are light again." He looked from one to the other of his companions, amazed. It was impossible to connect such faces with jest or deceit. He arose, greatly agitated. One of his defenses was gone. The children had unwittingly done him a service, the value of which was beyond estimate. He turned to the open air for quiet.

The three friends wandered away to the fields and woods, the children, in their own ways, happy in the companionship of the man who could play and sing and draw so well, and who could enter so easily into their lives. For him, in some mysterious way, they felt an irresistible attachment. Something like happiness that morning came to him. In them he seemed to be living over again the life of both himself and the woman who had loved him.

Their amusements were novel. This time it was the boy who taught him. They found a colony of ants in a piece of clay ground and wondered at their numbers.

Little Chilon told him how he first saw them in the early Spring come forth from under a rock and march almost two and two for hundreds of yards; how he timed them, finding their speed to be at the rate of a mile and a half per day; and how their march left a pathway in the sand over which came stragglers with unerring accuracy. The little fellow took his magnifying glass and showed him how they met, touched and passed on. Did they touch? Did they speak? Could they behold such objects as men? Or were their senses inverse to man's, taking up sight, sound, smell and sensation at the points where his left off? And if the human being were invisible to the ant, might not we be surrounded by beings just out of reach of our senses? Such were the ideas the little fellow put forth with face flushed and eyes sparkling, driving the wise guest to the corner of ignorance and the humiliation of defeat.

Little Lena looked on, proud and happy that her companion knew so much.

"Chilon says," she put in, when a break occurred, "that he used to study the stars with his Grandfather Pierre until he found out that the world was just as big the other way, and as his grandfather had a microscope and didn't have a telescope, he let the stars go and took up the little things." The man found himself laughing naturally for the first time in many a year.

"Just as big the other way! That is a novel idea, indeed. But it recalls the lines:

"Big fleas have little fleas
To worry and to bite 'em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas
And so ad infinitem."

The boy was charmed.

"That is it. And just as there is no end to division, so there can be no end to nature. Grandfather said that when we reach what men call the simple elements, we simply reach something that we have not learned how

to divide, and that even the atoms are theoretically divisible." The guest fanned himself with his hat, and drew a long breath, at which Lena laughed. Instantly the boy's manner changed and he became grave and silent. Life was to him intensely real, and its mysteries perplexing. He had never developed a sense of humor.

They strode on silently together; but presently Lena slipped her hand in his and he lost his constraint.

They were approaching the swamp, and presently what seemed to have been the din of distant cowbells grew so loud and close at hand that the man, lifting his face, exclaimed with sudden recognition:

"The bell locusts! Is it possible!"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, with interest again. "This is the first year that I have heard them. You know they come every seventeenth year."

The senior Chilon had turned his face away.

"Seventeen years! Is it possible! It seems but yesterday—and almost upon this spot."

"You have heard them before, sir?"

"Yes, my boy, I have heard them."

"There is a legend in our family," said Lena, "about the letter 'W.' The old French had no 'W' you know, and after we came to this country no one ever married into the family, who had the letter in his name; and so it doesn't appear in the family tree. The old legend says in rhyme:

> "When the 'W' enters the Marbeau tree,
> Happy will the next bride be."

"Grandfather says that I am to be the next bride; that all trees down here are Marbeau trees, and every locust in them has a 'W' on his wing."

Little Chilon had caught one.

"See! there it is on each wing," he said. "People used to think that they meant 'War' and 'Want.' But the housefly has the same mark."

The man was not listening. Standing there seventeen

years before he had promised his fair bride happiness, using the argument of the locust's wings.

Upon that spot! It was full of strange memories. Within sight of it were the burned and blackened logs of a ruined cabin protruding from masses of vines and weeds. Their feet had paused in an overgrown path that led to the waters of the creek. Seeing his interest, Lena said briefly:

"Aunt Silvy used to live there. She was a very old woman and a witch doctor, the negroes say. Did you ever hear about her death, Mr. Underhill? I don't believe it, but some of the people here say that Satan carried her off."

"I have never heard of it," said he, gently. "Tell me the story."

"Well, you will laugh, I know; but it isn't my story. The swamp here was once haunted by an old gray man who would ride up and down the creek in the night and scream and moan; and people said that Aunt Silvy knew all about him, and that he brought her medicines that killed people or made them crazy; or cured them, just as she wanted it. They say she sold herself when she was young to Satan, and he was to let her live until she was ninety years old and then come for her. Well, when she was ninety, one night some men who had been out possum hunting saw her house on fire while she was inside digging up the hearth with the coals falling all over her; but she didn't mind the fire a bit. They were all afraid to go in or near the house, because she had drawn a ring around it, and anybody that crossed that line would die in a year. So they stood and watched. All at once the gray man rushed up out of the swamp and into the fire. When he came out he had old Aunt Silvy and they disappeared in the swamp again. That was the last ever seen of her around here; but a man sitting upon the river bank, fishing, saw a white boat come down the river in the night with the old gray man in it, and stretched out be-

fore him was old Aunt Silvy, dead. He just caught one glimpse of them and then the air was full of the smell of burning sulphur, and he ran away. Grandfather says it's all bosh! Old Aunt Silvy caught on fire and fell into the creek and was drowned. He had the creek dragged for her body, but they never found her. Anyway, you can't get a negro to come down here again in the night time."

"It is not true," said the man, sadly; "it is not true." And then, seeing the child's surprise: "There are no ghosts except the ghosts of ourselves. As we grow old we change—the poet says we rise on stepping stones of our dead selves. These 'dead selves' are the people we used to be, and they live in our own and the memory of people who knew us. That is all." The boy looked up quickly.

"You do not know. There are beings about us who are only sometimes visible. It all depends upon the acuteness of your vision. Men used to see better than now, and mythology was real then."

"I have never seen one," said the man, a troubled look upon his face as he noted the intense earnestness of the little fellow. "My life is full of ghosts—ghosts of memory —the people that I have known who died and whom I killed."

Lena was startled.

"Have you ever killed anybody?"

The fearful night upon which he had gone forth from the spot where they stood floated back upon his memory. Again he saw the dead face of Richard looking up to him. He turned away quickly from the child's searching eyes. Controlling himself, he explained his meaning.

"But I," said Chilon, softly, "have seen a person who used to live on earth and is dead. And I have heard many more."

The elder Chilon shook his head gravely.

"It is impossible. 'Tis a bad plan to dwell upon such matters, my boy!"

"It is true, though! I have seen a woman who was, in

some other life, my mother. She comes to me in the night when I go into the woods and puts her arm about me, and then tells me of herself. She is always very sad, but she loves me, and I believe her. If only she would let me see her face!"

The little girl had gone to gather a lily and the two Chilons were alone. Thrilled by the recital and his young companion's manner the elder waited. "I have never told anybody about this," continued the little fellow, "but I cannot help but tell you. You will believe me, I know. She says if any one finds out about her she can't come to me any more; and I would be very sorry, for I love her, and she must love me."

"Where do you find her, my son?"

"I miss her sometimes, but she writes me little letters then, and puts them in a hollow tree. She calls me her darling,—see, here is one of them." He passed a note to the other.

At sight of the writing Chilon felt the scene waver around him, but as he read the lines, passionate bursts of love and affection and endearments, the tears streamed from his eyes.

"Lena!" he whispered. Amazement succeeded his emotion.

"Tell me," he exclaimed in awe, "what it is that she says to you!"

"She says that I was stolen away from her years ago and kept from her. Sometimes she seems to think that I am grown and sometimes that I am a baby. She calls me her baby often; but oftener it is Chilon; and then she tells me of times in that other life when we used to be together in these woods and in the house, and loved each other very dearly."

A fear, a great horror, suddenly filled the heart of the man. With trembling hand he clasped the boy's shoulder.

"I will keep your secret," he said—"Leave me the letter! Both are safe with me!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

The colonel began to read his story one morning in the cool library, his guest before him, his little table by his side:

"In the year 1863, Francis, my older brother, yielded up his life among the guns of Doubleday at Gettysburg. Bold, handsome, possessed of many talents and a passionate energy that carried all before him, whether the game was love or war, he was universally esteemed in the circles that knew him, and at home the idol, the beau ideal, of the family. To him had descended a fair share of the Marbeau wealth, but Ravenswood, with most of the family relics, came to me. Richard, our half brother and the oldest of the family, cold, phlegmatic and all for business, was already established in his chosen profession, the law, and had made his home in the city. He took but little interest in family matters. The other brother, Gaston, much older than Francis and myself, had become interested in some family affairs abroad and made his home in England. But of him, more anon.

"Francis and his inheritance soon parted company, but when I found that the woman I loved preferred him, I cut off from Ravenswood a good portion, built thereon a house to his liking, saw him happily married and settled the whole upon his wife and children. I have already explained that this lady was a descendant of the Austrian colony that had drifted across the Atlantic. Francis, when passing the soldiers' last ditch in the thunders of Gettysburg, saw bending over him the familiar face of Robert Aubren, one of his tenants, a very distant connection of his wife, a strong, stolid young man from the class known as the peasantry in other countries, the class that furnished so much brawn and muscle and patriotism—

that helped to make the private soldier of the Confederacy the wonder of the age. To this man, then scarcely in his majority, himself grievously wounded also, he consigned his sword and a message to me that read like a line from some medieval romance. Soon after peace dawned upon America, the gentle little wife of Francis fell a victim to anxiety and mental depression, through long waiting and hope deferred. For there had come rumors during many months of a Marbeau in hospital and prison in some far away northern state. But time brought no confirmation of these rumors. One day the family burial ground received the little mother, and her devoted spirit went home again.

"Then it was that I undertook to carry out my brother's trust. I took to my home the two orphans, Celeste and Chilon, and hung the unstained sword of the soldier on the library wall. The cottage was leased with its holdings to Robert Aubren.

At time of his coming to Ravenswood Chilon was about ten years of age, and Celeste probably a year older. A teacher was engaged for them, and they began life anew under happier conditions than their war-shadowed childhood had known. But another change followed: my wife, their invalid mother by adoption, passed out of life also, leaving the household consisting of Celeste, Chilon and my Lena, their cousin, the latter but six. For good reasons, chiefly because my wife, who had been a Catholic, had made it a dying request, I placed the latter in the care of convent sisters, keeping with me only the nephew and the niece.

"It was about this time that my brother, Gaston, came from England to Ravenswood, a strange, quiet gentleman devoted to etching, to engraving and to music, which with him amounted almost to a passion. All gayety had of course long since passed from the home, and for the convenience of Gaston the ball room upstairs was partially cleared of its rubbish and turned into a studio and

workshop. His life had been full of shadow, and I resolved to try to brighten its decline.

"In this room Gaston gradually gathered everything demanded by his art, and these, prouder of his talents than I would have admitted, I supplemented with an organ of great sweetness and power, the organ now in the parlor.

"Celeste soon developed the characteristics which marked her after life. She possessed the beauty of her saintly mother, and all the moral qualities of the Austrian blended with the spirit of the French side of the family. It was not long before her quiet dignity and quick decision placed her practically at the head of the household, then without a feminine director, and this she accomplished while still attending closely to her lessons and studies. Possessed of none of the talents which, for generations had cropped out among the Marbeaus she yet possessed the genius for home-making which is the rarest of all feminine gifts. Confusion sank into order where she walked, and the light touch of her hand here and there made the dark and dusty rooms bright with sunlight and the flowers. Hers was simply a deep, reverential nature, born probably of artistic and moral sense in preceding generations.

But if Celeste possessed none of the talents, Chilon had enough for both. Impatient of restraint, an enemy to system and application, but capable of intense effort and prodigious labor, where the mental and psychological bents were involved, he was at once, even in childhood, artist, mechanic and musician. His conception of form and color made him the friend of pen, pencil, brush and tools and his desire for expression of that which these could not express brought forth his voice and drew his fingers to the ivories of the organ. The coming of that uncle so like him in many things seemed to have been preordained of fate; and the long workshop of the artist soon became the playhouse of the boy. As Gaston bent

above his plates, transferring to the metal the forms of nature and her shadowed light, Chilon labored by him upon the same lines or played the simpler melodies on the organ, at times accompanying these with his sweet tenor voice. This development brought him into high favor with his uncle, and gained for him a careful instruction that would have otherwise been practically impossible. So it was that when Chilon was ready for college he was in reality ready for the serious work of an artist or musician abroad.

"But as for Celeste, she calmly declined to entertain the thought of going away to school, and as calmly settled down to supplement the education which had been imparted to her by special studies and reading. And she strongly opposed the sending of Chilon elsewhere than to a school of art. In this she was ably seconded by Gaston, holding that what he learned in the modern college from books would not offset that which a boy of his temperament would gather from companions, tastes that would militate against the higher development of his artistic nature. So, after many months' discussion, it was decided that Chilon should remain at Ravenswood until eighteen or nineteen, and then go to Paris with his Uncle Gaston, who had agreed to stay with him there until his future was assured.

"But destiny, or men's passions, as the case may be, swept aside this little house of cards as a breath of wind removes a dead leaf. To Celeste, as I realized afterwards, one man in the world had, from the day he came back from the war, possessed a powerful attraction. Robert Aubren was her ideal. To those who understood the heart of such a girl as Celeste—I did not understand it then—its predilection was very natural. He possessed that stolidity of character, that quiet, dogged determination which appealed to her most strongly. It is possible that her own character took its shape somewhat from his. Combined with perfect honesty was an absolute fearless-

ness of demeanor and a manliness that, while unyielding, was gracefully deferential to all about him. And above all, he had followed her soldier father to his fate 'among the guns of Doubleday,' and brought back his message. Robert's was the last friendly hand that touched his, and with such a girl the fact was eternal consecration. Upon his hearing had fallen the last words to home and friends. She has told me since that she was accustomed to stand in the library under her father's picture and think of the scene, the loyal, brave, intrepid boy, bleeding from desperate wounds, kneeling beside his dying officer upon that fatal field, while through the smoke that rolled above them death was darting a myriad of fiery tongues. And sometimes she would lift her tear-dimmed eyes to see the hero of her dreams standing within the library, hat in hand.

"Well, it was the old, old story. The business of Robert Aubren brought him to the mansion often, and oftener his inclination found business where there was none. Love, founded upon gratitude and mutual sympathy, bloomed as naturally as a rose in the Ravenswood garden. By this time Celeste was a tall, well grown girl, with a figure straight as an Indian's, and a poise of head that was superb. She moved ever with a gentle grace, queenlike in its simple dignity, and her voice was very sweet to the ears of youth."

"You have the gift of description, Colonel."

"Ah, my dear sir, in describing the girl I describe the mother. But to continue. The difference in their stations never seemed to her an objection, and Robert was Austrian, too. She looked upon the man alone, and thought him more than her equal. So, when one day Robert Aubren, meeting her in the twilight under the pines as she came slowly home from a visit to old Silvy, spoke to her simply of his love and hopes, she looked upon him with moist eyes and lips that trembled, and told him that she had loved him ever since the battle smoke

lifted above the dead at Gettysburg, and would love him while life for her remained. Those were her words as she told them to me. A season of delightful confidence succeeded this meeting, full of love and plans for the future; and then Robert came to me with his declaration. There was a violent scene and an emphatic denial, followed by bitter reproaches; but that was all. The simple dignity of the suitor, his fine reserve, and the remembrance that he had gone over the heights of Gettysburg for less than he now sought, would have checked any personal violence. Robert simply bowed his head and withdrew. His conduct was that of a polished, high-born gentleman. But Celeste was a Marbeau, and on equal terms, and the scene between us developed a fiery passion that filled me with consternation. We parted; I pledged never to recognize her again, even if she were forced to beg her bread in the streets, and she not to enter my doors again unless I were dying and wished for her forgiveness.

"Pride is a very foolish thing, Mr. Underhill."

The reader adjusted his glasses.

"Well, she packed her trunks, rode away with Robert, and Rose Cottage knew a loving wife again. Then I made another mistake. I have been making them all my life," he added, looking up.

"Lena had been at school in the convent all these years, but allowed to come home in the summer. She returned now to become a part of the household. A shy, little dark-eyed girl, she drifted naturally to Celeste's side and chose her for all time for her confidences; and the mother-heart of the older girl took her in. But if Celeste became her guardian, to a certain extent, Chilon was her playmate. The only boy she had ever known; handsome, winning and full of talents, he exerted over the child from the first an influence that was, even under the circumstances, remarkable. They were companions during these golden summers, the happiest days of life for them. Am

I wearying you, Mr. Underhill? This part of the story, so beautiful to me, has grown so only through many years. It may possess no interest for you."

The guest spoke very gently: "Read on, my dear Colonel. Every man has had his romance."

Colonel Marbeau looked to him with a quick sympathy, and continued:

"For, whether Chilon moved upon the lake or fished in the cool depths of the shady creeks, or gathered fruit, or played upon the organ, or painted and drew pictures, the little wide-eyed girl was with him. The older artist grew young again when she was at home, and never tired of her company. Those were famous days for the three, when they could pack lunch-baskets and go abroad for their sketches; and many the woodland scenes that live now in black and white and in colors, with the child Lena in the foreground. For in the thus recorded memories of these two, her admirers, she sleeps with her head upon the cool, green moss, under giant oaks; and runs with hand outstretched for golden butterflies; and by the side of cool, dark waters plaits into wreaths for her hat the long-stemmed lilies; and walks demure in the colonnade of pines; and sits with her bonnet on her knee and face upturned unto the crimson sunset where homing swallows circle in the air.

"If you will look into that portfolio over there, Mr. Underhill, some day when you have an hour, I think you will be charmed. It contains the Lily of Ravenswood, painted day by day, as she bloomed under her southern sky."

He pointed with his glasses to a mahogany stand, not seeing with his unassisted eyes the white face turned resolutely toward his own, and hands clenched upon the chair-arm. He lifted a page, and continued:

"They were faithful lovers, then, these two, the old man and the boy. And if a judge had been there to pronounce a verdict, he would have said the elder loves her as his life; the younger, in a careless, happy, unrealizing,

unreasoning way;—and she! Why, she loves him, the elder, very tenderly and truly; but he, the younger, is her life itself."

The old man's manner was pathetic and deprecating, and a sad smile flitted across his face.

"Pardon my diffusion, Mr. Underhill. We old folks of the south must live in the past; the present has little for us; the future—nothing."

He waited a moment, and began again:

"And then, broken-hearted, she would go away to The Sisters and take up the tiresome, cheerless life, so unlike that of Ravenswood.

"I speak of her now before her final return,—while she was writing to Chilon long, sweet letters, full of girlish love. And he would tell of the sunny days at home again, of trout that struck his hook on the lake and quail that fell before his gun; of the songs he had written and pictures painted—songs and pictures that held her memory. I have them, gathered and preserved—blue ribbons, withered flowers, and all. Upon the margin of his pages, as he wrote, he would put little sketches of his uncles, and himself, that made home real for her.

"You see, Mr. Underhill, I have lived over all this so often, have had it from Lena so vividly, it has become like some beautiful dream of my own youth; but, perhaps you have guessed it already; so, as a boy, did I love the mother of Celeste; so did I write her passionate letters from the heart of Ravenswood."

"You loved him, too, then;—Chilon?"

The man sitting in the shadow spoke but little above a whisper:

"Loved him!" Colonel Marbeau lifted a hand as though to emphasize some thought; but he changed his mind. "I did not know how much, then; I was saving the country and immersed in politics; fighting a phantom outside and harboring ruin at home.

"Then came the day when she returned home to stay.

Imagine how slowly for the dear girl the train dragged its weary way across the hills and plains, how long the nights in the stuffy sleeper, how tiresome the everyday people around her, idling over papers and their eternal lunches. She pitied them, she told me once, their lives were tame and colorless; they held no Ravenswood,—no Chilon!

"He went to meet her in the city,—Chilon did, happy over her home-coming, happier over her happiness. Too fast, then, the steady mare; oh, how much too fast! And so they came to the great gate at home and entered the avenue; and so Chilon placed his arm about her, and kissing her upon the lips, said: 'Welcome home to Ravenswood!' Imagine the scene, Mr. Underhill,—and the girl from convent life! Startled, she looked into his steady brown eyes bent upon her, and read the secret beyond. Chilon loved her! Oh, what a place then was Ravenswood! And I, meeting her at the door, a little grayer, a little sadder, a little colder, perhaps—for pride, not sympathy, was the life-note then,—took her in my arms and kissed her, too. My God!" he exclaimed, passionately snatching his glasses from his eyes, "Why, why did not some one warn me?—why was I permitted to see all only through the perspective of sad, of bitter years and the mists of tears?"

Chilon arose quickly and walked away, too much agitated for words. Remembering, he came back, and stood near the speaker, who, half-ashamed of his outburst, was, apparently, looking for the next line of his narrative.

"My life has been a lonely one, Colonel! Every heart has its echoes; something in your story has awakened mine." The Colonel reached forth his hand, and pressed his companion's.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE COLONEL'S STORY CONTINUED.

When Colonel Marbeau looked up, he continued the narrative without reading: "I come now, Mr. Underhill, to a part of the story that is full of misery for me, for while I did my duty, as I saw it, I suffered myself to be deceived by a base nature, and I broke the hearts of those dearest to me.

"The one flaw in the happiness of our young people in those summer days was Richard Marbeau. Already a man grown and established, not questioning the soundness of the family arrangement touching the future of Lena, he invaded Ravenswood at all times. The character of this man, this beast,—but no; he was born my kinsman. I expose his character because its exposure defends others who were blameless. He had begun early to press his suit; for Ravenswood was a fortune in itself. I know his object now. Little presents found their way to the convent, and he himself lost no opportunity to visit it when going north. During vacations he frequently took time to come out for a day, and that day, by the young people here, was counted lost."

The Colonel picked up his sheets, and resumed:

"Lena had not, at that time, reached the point of disputing the validity of the family arrangement in any respect, and so they were obliged to take the unwelcome guest into their plans, whatever they might be, and omit Uncle Gaston. For the latter would have nothing to do with the city Marbeau. His self-importance, his loud dress and assumption, and his narrowness, palled upon Gaston's artistic nature. After one or two efforts to be polite, he simply abandoned the field and betook himself to work that permitted no interruption. Left to the two cousins, Lena, on such occasions, had a miserable day

of it, for on one side was Richard, with his clumsy selfishness and unsympathetic voice, and on the other, the laughing Chilon, ready to tease her over the absurdity of the whole proceedings. For Chilon, young as he was, knew that oil and water would blend before there would be any love between Richard and Lena; and marriage without love was something that never entered his mind in connection with Lena Marbeau. He did not value correctly the reaction of a loving and disappointed nature. He did not know life!

"And well might Chilon smile over the absurdity of the situation at that time; for the confidence between himself and the girl had become as near perfect as may be. He had entered his nineteenth year and she her seventeenth, and the passionate love of the girl for the handsome boy was almost idolatry. He returned this devotion with love less only to the extent that his art and music gave him other vents for emotion; for in these she found rivals, while with her, life held but one thing worth loving;—Chilon. Their last year at Ravenswood was an idyl, too perfect to endure. Long walks in the woodlands, boat rides for lilies, and sketching tours filled up many a day; and at night what was happier fate for her than to lie upon the leather lounge in the library and have Chilon read in musical tones of others who loved as they in olden days of romance; or to sit in the moonlight of the porch while he sang, an accomplishment in which she could furnish a sweet soprano to his tenor; or to wait in the dim, old ballroom upstairs, curled up on a dilapidated chair, while he awoke the grand, old melodies of the masters with the touch and inspiration of the artist-musician. They were golden days and nights, holy in their unbroken happiness.

"I saw none of this, then; or saw it unsympathetically.

"Absorbed in the political campaign and a series of articles that I had promised our local paper upon the aggressiveness of corporations, I saw only a boy and girl

in the house amusing themselves as boys and girls will; and when one day my attention was rudely called to the situation by Richard, whose cunning mind scented alarm, I hooted at the thought of love between them. But Richard was persistent; and so one day I got Lena into the library and spoke seriously of her approaching life.

"'You are now in your seventeenth year, my child,' I said, 'and should begin to contemplate the time when you will become a wife. Richard is eager to make the interval as short as possible, and probably when you are eighteen, I shall be forced to give you up. Women in our family, you know, are married early in life, and while, if the circumstances permitted it, I would be glad to have you a year or two in society first, we shall have to trust to you to find your gayety afterwards as a young wife. Remember, now, that as the new dignity approaches you should begin to lay aside something of your girlish life, and become a woman. Your cousin Chilon is a bright, happy-hearted fellow, but he is only your cousin at last; and, even to him, under the circumstances, you must begin to show a certain amount of reserve. Richard is coming to-morrow to talk with you, and I wish very much for you two to arrive at a clear understanding.' The poor child's face rises before me as I read, Mr. Underhill. Abashed, frightened, with a pain at her heart, Lena crept back into the workroom and told Chilon all about it. The long-dreaded issue was at hand. What was to be done? Chilon was too furious for good judgment; he wished to go at once to the library, God bless him, and protest against the inhumanity of this contract; or he would wait until to-morrow and insult the expectant bridegroom and give him choice of pistols out under the pines. No; Chilon's method would only hasten the catastrophe, she argued. There was good old Uncle Gaston; she would go to him; and go she did, finding herself in five minutes sobbing in his loving arms. There, instead of with me, she poured out her soul; not only the hatred she bore to the officious

Richard, but the tender love that it held for dear, sweet Chilon. Old Gaston blinked madly over this recital, I was told, and rested his forehead upon her tresses so long that she ceased to weep and wondered. When he spoke, his playful manner was gone; she hardly recognized his calm, earnest tones; he said to her: 'My child, do not cry; you will not marry Richard Marbeau until you wish it. Is that sufficient?' She took his face in her hands, ecstatically happy. 'Yes, indeed,' she cried. 'Because,' said he, with something like his old playfulness come back, 'if it isn't, I promise also that you shall marry Chilon whenever you wish.' Think of that. And yet I love Gaston the better for it. 'But,' said he, 'the chances are you may have to marry him before you wish, to escape the other!' She went away, blissfully happy, my poor, little girl, happy to escape from me; and, putting aside his tools, Gaston descended to the library. What happened there, nobody will ever know; but Gaston went back with a set look upon his face so different from its usual placidness, that the two sweethearts, waiting in the turn of the stairs, feared the worst had come. He would not be questioned, but the next day he took Chilon into the woods.

"'I will arrange everything,' said the true-hearted old fellow. 'Prepare Lena!' Chilon went home, and in the quiet of her own room, where they crept for uninterrupted confidences, told her of their plans. There was no mother to advise, and her little heart was sorely tried by fear for the future. She knelt before her youthful lover, and laid her head in his lap, her eyes overflowing with almost hysterical tears. 'I have no one but you, Chilon; tell me what to do?' And Chilon, dear boy, as honest and true as she, with unhesitating confidence of youth, told her, painting life as he dreamed it. One day, the three only walked a little further, and a country justice made Chilon and Lena man and wife, and gave a pledge to secrecy, that to his honor be it said, he never broke.

"Upon the same day Gaston received a letter that disturbed and distressed him beyond measure. With a few hasty preparations he disappeared, enjoining upon Chilon that he should wait until his return, which would not be more than two weeks later, and they would then go together and acquaint me with the fact that Lena positively refused longer to consider Richard Marbeau as a prospective husband, and abide the consequences. If then there seemed to be a chance to substitute Chilon, a year or two abroad would end the complication. If there was no chance, then his stay might be longer; but Lena, in either case, was safe.

"Two weeks passed, and many another; and still no news of Gaston. Then a letter came from England, urging Chilon to face the issue alone, and communicate the result by mail; circumstances rendered his, Gaston's, return a matter of uncertainty. After many weeks of happiness, almost delirious, the time came when Chilon was forced to plead his cause. And well did he plead it, but he did not name the marriage. We quarreled; I was high-tempered in those days, Mr. Underhill—we quarreled and I struck him—with my whip; struck him, and the boy ran me through with his father's sword."

"Oh—but—it was in a blind rage, a burst of temper—he did not—he could not—you must know, sir, that it was unintentional."

The guest had arisen in his excitement. A sudden fury seemed to animate the old man.

"Unintentional! Sir, that wound is one of many, but I value it above all the rest. They record only the defense of home and property, while that one represents the defense of family honor. If it had been accident, I would have disowned him. Understand, sir, you slander him! God bless the boy, he did it a-purpose!"

"I beg your pardon," said the other, gently, "I certainly did not intend to offend——"

"Of course not, of course not! Pardon my excitement,

Mr. Underhill." He stretched forth his hand, which Chilon took and pressed gently.

"Well, the boy plunged out of the house, and hung around until he found I wasn't going to die, and then started, we think, to join Gaston in England; but he never reached there. Lena endured life at Ravenswood for two weeks, forced almost daily to receive Richard. And I—I was obstinate, too, in those days, Mr. Underhill,—I, determined to keep my promise to Richard's father, went to work to conclude the contract. The poor child, unable to endure the torment any longer, left the house and quietly took refuge with her cousin, Celeste, whose arms were outstretched gladly when she heard her story. Loyal Celeste! She, too, faced me—oh, they were not afraid of me—she drew down upon her devoted head another storm. Both of us had broken our promises! I did recognize her, and she came back without the asking. We parted again; I full of rage, and she quietly scornful, the friend of her brother's wife. But I anticipate.

CHAPTER XL.

THE COLONEL'S STORY CONTINUED.

"Richard Marbeau was a Marbeau in one thing, at least; he never knew when he was defeated. If he was such in any other respect, he dated back into other generations, for there had been evil Marbeaus, or this story would not have been written. Certain it is that his heredity was not of recent lives for, as this age knew them, while sometimes wicked as the world goes, they esteemed honor highly and fought in the open. Richard did not lack courage, but ambition and avarice were with him passions strong enough to bend any means to suit his needs. It is impossible that he could have loved Lena Marbeau at the time of her marriage. There was no common meeting-point for their natures, no association, no sympathy. That which constituted the mainspring of her action was something strange to him; and his character was one to be abhorred the more it developed within her knowledge. But Lena meant Ravenswood, and he loved Ravenswood with a force and a lust beyond expression. When, responding to a message from me, he was informed of the demand made by Chilon, he almost laughed aloud in his triumph; the strangeness of it all, even then, affected me.

"'I need not remind you, Uncle,' he said, with affected humility, 'that I feared this complication long ago. The point now is to guard against future danger, and I beg to urge an early marriage. That once accomplished, you may leave the rest to me.'

"'My views entirely,' I said to him. 'You speak of an early marriage; what do you say to thirty days?'

"'To-day would be better, Uncle, but I think we must defer somewhat to Lena?' In this manner we proceeded to dispose of the poor girl, who was anxiously waiting

upstairs for the results of this conference. But when acquainted with the decision in her affairs, she, for the first time, showed open rebellion. She would not even consider it, she declared. Argument, promises of large wealth, pleadings for family pride, persuasions, threats, and even my towering passion, could not daunt or move her. The family spirit had been roused, and both of us knew then that difficulties were before us. Days of harassment followed, of affectionate pleadings; again, of argument upon argument; and days of coldness and almost cruel reproach. To no end. The girl stood out bravely. She could do no less, of course.

"One day, after a more than usual strain upon her nerves, she came to the library pale and agitated.

" 'Father,' she said, 'it is a hard thing to say to you, but home has now become purgatory to me. I had hoped to be here with you always; to take the place of mother, and be your comfort when old age descended upon you, but that is now impossible. You urge me to do that to which death a hundred times over is preferable. I will never consent, not while Chilon lives; and I think if he were dead, I would lie down and die, too, rather than become the wife of Richard. I cannot stay here with that decision; you would not permit it; and so while I am well enough and strong enough to keep my faith, I am going to leave you. Let us not part in anger, father. Kiss me good-bye.' Dumfounded at a decision that I had not thought her capable of forming, I sat gazing straight ahead, too much affected to trust my voice. 'Good-bye, then, father!' she said. She bent over me, and touched my forehead with her lips, and was gone." Colonel Marbeau's voice had faltered. His hearer sat with his face in his hands. Presently he resumed: "I could not for some time believe it. She was only frightening me; she would go a little way, and come back, crying, to be forgiven. She did not come back, and night descended. When, thoroughly aroused, I was mak-

ing preparations to follow her, a message came from thoughtful Robert Aubren, saying that Lena was with Celeste, and Rose Cottage would be her home until she chose to leave it. The relief gave me a chance to rage, and rage I did, finding a sympathetic auditor in Richard. But when I swore that I would disinherit her, oh, then his sympathies were touched. 'Give her more time,' he pleaded; 'she will come around some day.' He believed it himself.

"From that day, however, Richard probably dated his admiration for Lena Marbeau as a woman. He could never love her, in the sense that love is an intellectual phenomenon; he was incapable of that form of love, under any circumstances; but he could love as the mere man loves; and possessing that idiosyncrasy of mind which despises the easily-won honor, he was ready now to devote himself, heart and soul, to the conquest of the defiant woman. He felt that his personality had not been given a fair chance; the unhappy contract ought never to have been broached to the girl. She would have loved him but for that; she must love him in spite of it. As for Chilon, he was a mad boy, and soon to be forgotten. In which conclusion Richard justified a current saying, that everybody knew the Marbeaus except the Marbeaus.

"I can imagine his action as he rode slowly homeward that night. The lawyer's mind began to cast about for the next move in the game already half lost. What should first be done? Time and absence are fearful conspirators against young love, he reasoned, smiling; the first thing to be done is to isolate Lena. He decided then to ask me to intercept and withhold from her any letters that might come from Chilon, and I told him that he might count with certainty upon that being done; but he desired also to get at the contents of those letters, to arm himself with the information of Chilon's movements, and this, he soon learned, could not be expected through

me; for a true Marbeau, sir, is too high-born to break the seal of a letter addressed in confidence to another.

"There was another way, and it came to him as an inspiration. His political power was already such as to entitle him to patronage, and he had only to secure the service of a tool in office to have withdrawn from the Ravenswood mail all letters addressed to Lena. They came fast enough, at first; passionate outbursts of love, plans for the future, roseate dreams! But the poor young wife, bearing her burdens, received none of them." The face of the guest was lifted a moment, and his lips moved silently. The old gentleman did not perceive the act, for his own eyes were dim.

"Oh, those days of waiting and watching for Chilon! But if long for me, how dreary for Lena! Not a sun arose but brought hopes of letters or of his coming; not a sunset but left her disappointed. Grief-stricken, afflicted with a settled melancholy, she took up a woman's burden. Richard came again and again, until finally she totally refused to see him. She sent the message by a negro woman, and his conduct that day indicated the man; he lashed this woman with his rawhide whip; an innocent, defenseless, old woman, obeying orders. And still he persisted, until one day a letter from Chilon betrayed the marriage. He was too late. He went at once to the ordinary's office; there was the record of the license.

"'Who authorized the issuance of this license,' he asked, scarcely able to suppress his rage.

"'Why, it was issued to your uncle, old Mr. Gaston Marbeau, if I remember correctly,' said the clerk, in surprise. 'Nothing irregular, I trust?'

"'Nothing,' said the unhappy man, promptly. 'Please be kind enough to forget my question. Do you understand?' The office was elective; the officer understood. The ordinary told me this recently.

"Before Richard's vision, as he walked back to his rooms, was doubtless a dissolving view. It was Ravens-

wood, carrying with it Congress and all political preferment. For Richard, the heir, and expectant bridegroom, was a man for royal treatment, and Richard the deserted, was a man for street-corner jests and squibs in opposition journals. All that had saved him so far was the public's total ignorance of the given name of his expectant bride, and the fact that a hundred licenses had been issued to Marbeaus of the African kind since the war. For the family negroes chose their master's name. As it stood, he was the only possessor of all the facts outside the actual participants in the tragedy, for tragedy it seemed to him.

"But when his disturbed mind settled back into the old grooves he began to ask himself if all were indeed lost! There had been a marriage, but it was a foolish, childish affair, and could be set aside by the girl's natural guardian. Could it be set aside without her consent? Doubtful. Then her consent must be had. Fortunately for him, husband and wife were isolated and separated. He held the commanding position. He noticed with grim satisfaction that Chilon reproached her for failure to write, and soon these reproaches deepened into what was almost rage."

"Oh, the infamy of it!" The guest could not restrain it.

"No other word describes it," said the Colonel, sadly. And then, continuing to read: "Was it possible that Chilon had found other means to communicate with her? Richard, although repulsed, and finally denied admission to Rose Cottage, to settle this point, determined to try once more for an interview. He wrote a note to the unhappy girl that he had a communication of the utmost importance to make concerning Chilon, and sent it to her. She invited him to call, and he did so, his manner grave, deferential and sympathetic. He was a good actor.

"'I come to you to-day, Lena,' he said, 'as your cousin only; all of the old hopes I entertained are dead. I know

your secret.' She waited breathlessly,—the poor little woman. 'I have accidentally discovered that you married Chilon. No one else knows it, and I pledge you my word of honor that I will not reveal it until you consent.' His manner, I am told, his air and sincerity seemed perfect, and therein, Mr. Underhill, lies a mystery; how may we boast of the talents and genius of our kin as hereditary and escape the artistic rascality which now and then crops out? Even Lena was impressed and deceived. 'What I desire of you now,' he said, 'is Chilon's address. Give me that and I may help you.' What was her reply? 'I thank you, Richard; I think that I must have misjudged you. You are kind, very kind, to me!' She could not control her tears, he had touched her so deeply. She did not know the address and said so. He was amazed, of course. But he prepared the way for his next move. 'I am afraid,' he murmured, 'there is something wrong.' He reflected a moment. 'Lena,' he said, 'you have been distrustful of me without cause. If you will look back you will perceive that the arrangement made for us was no more my doing than yours. I only sought to carry out my share honorably and sincerely. When I found opposition, I met it like a man, not knowing it was so serious. From to-day I am your cousin and defender; if I can win back your husband and smooth away your difficulties over yonder at Ravenswood, I will do it. Will you trust me?'

"Oh, Mr. Underhill, when you judge this poor girl, think of her defenselessness. To have discredited him would have been to accuse him of a baseness impossible to any human being with a heart in him, it seemed to her. Covering her face, down which the tears were now streaming, she gave him her free hand. 'I do trust you, cousin,' she said, 'and I am sorry to have caused you pain and disappointment. But I was not to blame if I loved Chilon; I could not help it. I will always love him.' He pressed her hand. It was well for his plan that his face

did not betray the triumph which must have filled him when she finished.

"He then unfolded his scheme; he would employ detectives and trace out the fugitive, re-establish her at home and get his uncle's blessing. He made a beautiful picture of the end and left her full of hope. His one mistake was in urging her to return, meanwhile, to Ravenswood. She met this with a passionate refusal.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE STORY CONCLUDED

"The plot into which Richard had now entered was to him simply a game, the stake, Ravenswood and a sentimental wife, who would, in society, soon forget her little romance. In this game Chilon was his opponent; a man who had wronged him deeply. 'All is fair in love and war,' he argued with me once, talking over his successes, 'and this being both love and war, I am doubly justified.' And, God forgive me, I smiled at his wit. But it is difficult to imagine what his next step would have been had not an accident, so timely as to seem the contribution of a malignant fate, assisted him. He had employed detectives, but when they came to look up Chilon at the address given, he had disappeared, leaving no trace. With him had been a man named Charles Adams, he learned, and this man, too, was missing. The pair had betaken themselves to some distant place, in all likelihood, but their object and their distination were not revealed to him. In the meantime, the months glided by, Lena still holding with patient dignity to the secluded life she had chosen—all communications with Ravenswood severed. She had developed well, and her girlish figure had now merged into that of the youthful matron, so dear to home lovers. She still received Richard kindly, and heard his reports of progress and lack of progress with alternate moods of hope and despair; but ever she maintained her unbroken faith in Chilon. 'If alive, he will come back,' she said; 'he trusts me and I will not doubt him.' The seeming accident of fate was this paragraph, which appeared in the columns of a Chicago paper, and was forwarded by the detective bureau:

"'Chilon Marbeau, a young man of prepossessing appearance, was arrested yesterday in this city for com-

plicity in the train robbery at Butte on the 3rd inst. His name and description were given in the confession of the wounded robber. He admits being present during the attack upon the train, but claims that he took no part in it. He is of a well-known southern family.' Even Richard Marbeau did not care to present this news item in person at Rose Cottage. He inclosed the paper by mail, marking the fatal lines, and sent a sympathetic note, declaring his belief in the innocence of Chilon, and his intention to go to his rescue when the trial took place. He urged the utmost secrecy. When next he called, Lena received him with unchanged dignity. 'Some one has stolen Chilon's name,' she said, simply. 'Crime with him is impossible.' But she was deeply grateful when Richard came to tell her of his early departure, and, holding his hand long, kissed it impulsively when he left.

"And Richard did so. He saw the accused tried and convicted and condemned to ten years' imprisonment; a man of Chilon's size, but older, who adhered to his name, boldly, even when Richard revealed his own identity. He started home with a copy of the condemned man's photograph—bitterly disappointed. It was while on this return trip that he hatched up the diabolical plot that worked so successfully. He called upon Lena and informed her, with tears in his eyes, that the story was true and Chilon's fate sealed, showing complete certified copies of court proceedings; and he delivered this message: 'Tell Lena I think that I must have been crazy at Ravenswood. I was flattered by her love, but I did not love her. I realize now that she ruined my life. But for her I would have been a success in art. I am now only a convict.'" A deep groan caused the Colonel to look quickly to his guest. "Infamous, infamous," he heard him say. "Then, and then only," continued the reader, with emotion, "did the girl's heart break; and then began the wearing process. This terrible secret brought her nearer to Richard, and one day he persuaded her to ride with him here. I received her

gladly, and with such love and affection as quite won her again. Again and again she returned. Then came the old arguments over and over; expediency and filial duty; and then family honor. This must be preserved; and they came not only from Richard, but from me. Divorce was easy; no one would blame her, and she was not a Catholic then. It was a mere matter of form, a seven days' wonder, that really would make her even a more interesting figure in society. And Richard had been so true, so noble! God save the mark! And then came old, austere Mrs. Marbeau, Richard's mother, to take her abroad for a few months, away from her sad associations.

"So was the crime completed. Lena, dazed, heart-broken, and caring little what happened, yielded. Papers were signed, and before she returned the divorce had been secured. Richard met them in New York, and an immediate and quiet marriage was arranged and consummated. She must go back home under his protection, he said. And Richard Marbeau had stolen his cousin's wife by an infamy that was almost unparalleled in the history of crime.

"But, skillful as he was, the whole plot at one time trembled in the balance. The Chicago item drifted south, and was copied into the home paper, coming at once beneath my eye. Such a slur upon the family could not be suffered to endure unquestioned. I sent for Richard, and was overjoyed to learn the truth; but what Richard had not counted upon was my immediate demand that the truth be published, and I would listen to no excuse. I prepared a statement, setting forth the facts, and published it with a cut of the real criminal, attaching my own signature and the certificate of identity that had been placed on the photograph. This ended the matter; and Richard forestalled defeat by meeting his mother in New York and consummating the marriage without consulting me.

"Upon their return, some weeks later, Lena settled

down to a life that was absolutely colorless. The mask was now thrown aside, and the true character of Richard Marbeau became revealed to her. He made no effort to keep up the devotion that had won his point. The woman now his wife was too gentle, shrinking and sad-eyed to fill the demands of his life; too unresponsive. Gradually he drifted back to former affiliations, and the one woman he came nearer to loving than any other, the woman who shall appear in this record only as Bijou. It is assumed that to her he unburdened himself of many things which in caution he would have kept secret. The old paper, that came, marked, to Lena, just after the birth of her daughter, containing the certificate and picture that vindicated Chilon, was directed in a hand the sight of which drew from Richard a gush of profanity. It was probably Bijou's return for a temporary slight. But if he had deemed Lena too shrinking and meek, he had cause then to change his mind. When she realized the cruelty of the deceptions practiced upon her, and how she had been led to forsake Chilon and betray his faith, she could cheerfully have slain the man who laughed at her transports. Without more ado, she took her babe and went to Rose Cottage. Celeste heard the whole of the sad story, forgave her, as she never thought to do, and took her back to her old place again. Weeks passed, and to save her child, for he made her think it would be taken from her, she dried her tears and returned to the city and to Richard. But before she went, she came here, and gave me the saddest experience of my life. I heard the story from her lips, the story of his infamy; and I heard my child accuse me of conspiracy to ruin her life. I kept her and sent for Richard. He gave an excuse and did not come. I went to his office, and, standing over him, made him write my vindication as I dictated it. Then I gave him my opinion of his conduct, without reservation.

"Lena now devoted herself to the little girl, going often

to Rose Cottage and sometimes coming here. On these visits she nearly approached happiness; but she would not stay. Over all hung the memory of Chilon, and the possibility of his return.

"Well, I am almost done. Her loneliness finally drove her to me. We loved each other too much to be enemies. She came, and she made me bring in Celeste, too. And then came the tragedy!"

"Tragedy!"

"The night we all met, a burglar entered my house through an upper room. Richard had come unexpectedly for the night, and met him in the hall. He attempted to capture the fellow, shot at him,—was stabbed and killed instantly. It was a terrible shock, but I learned to look upon it finally as a dispensation of mercy. God, I thought, meant to solve a vexed problem. Only,——"

A long pause followed.

"Only?" said Chilon, inquiringly.

"The problem is not solved. Chilon is still missing."

"And—the lady,—Lena?"

"She waits."

The simple dignity of the answer should have been conclusive, but Chilon could not endure the silence longer.

"Where is she?"

The Colonel did not appear to hear. For a few moments he was silent. Then he looked quickly to his guest.

"Oh, she is an invalid;—an invalid. Is there any detail I have omitted?"

"You have spoken often of Gaston; where is he?"

"Manchester, England."

"Perhaps Chilon is there,—or he may know of him. But of course you have considered that!"

"Yes. But he is not there;—has never been."

"You spoke of Gaston's studio;—may I see the room? I shall study your manuscript and may, perhaps, have a few questions more. I would be glad to see this studio."

"Certainly. Come with me!"

The two made their way upstairs and entered the long room. Nearly all of the artist's belongings had been removed. Chilon looked about him in alarm."

"It is no longer a studio!"

"No. Gaston sent for his plunder last week. A strange fancy, for the stuff was not worth freight. But artists are artists; which is another way of saying they are impractical. And a man's Lares and Penats must be respected."

Chilon laid his hand weakly upon an old desk.

"A queer piece of furniture, this. It would charm a hundred people—dealers—that I know!"

"Mere rubbish! This way to the end of the room, and I will show you Gaston's favorite view from the window."

The Colonel's back was turned for an instant as he led the way. Chilon touched the spring and a secret drawer opened. The plates were safe. But how obtain them? He looked about him hurriedly. At the door stood a tall mulatto woman, whose gray eyes held him spell-bound!

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SECRETS OF THE DESK.

Colonel Marbeau, his eyes resting lovingly upon the beautiful prospect afforded by the open window, was not mindful of the fact that his companion was standing amazed and in silence by the desk. Chilon recovered himself just in time to hear the footfalls of his host nearby, and his good-natured words:

"But you are more interested, I perceive, in old furniture than in nature. Well, you would hardly find an odder specimen. This desk was presented to my father by a foreign relative, who valued it because it was an heirloom. My father was not greatly impressed with heirlooms in the form of furniture, and it drifted about the house until Gaston rescued and brought it here. It has, among other oddities of construction,several secret apartments, a fashion in the Elizabethan days, I believe. This one, for instance, is the first,"—he opened the well-known drawer,—"and was generally supposed to be the only one. But within it is a spring which controls another—there, I believe I have found it. And, by the way, Gaston seems to have left here, in the first drawer, some of his old plates and papers. Now, let me see how that second scheme worked. Oh, yes; the top rises on grooves. There you are." The top was now lifted, showing a space a few inches deep, but extending across the whole length and breadth of the desk. Chilon was facing the woman at the door. He saw her gaze eagerly upon the desk as these features were pointed out, and start violently. The Colonel, following the direction of his gaze, saw her also. He instantly excused himself and went to her. Chilon looked to the plates; he even put his hand upon them. Would he ever have another opportunity, if he

neglected this one? He turned toward the door; the woman's eyes had never left him. Then he saw Colonel Marbeau coming, and laid the plates back.

"You were saying,"—he began.

"Oh, about the secret apartments. Now, inside this cavity is a spring that controls another space, which controls another; and so on. The desk is simply honeycombed with hidden spaces. I have forgotten the location of this one"—he was feeling in the second apartment, and now withdrew his hand. In it was a long, queer-looking document, a sheepskin covered with drawings, numbers and names. A look of delight flushed his face, and he trembled with suppressed excitement.

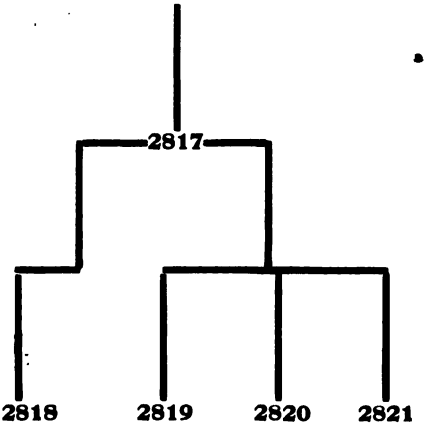
"How remarkable," he exclaimed. "Here is our family record, lost these forty years! Mr. Underhill, you are a mascot!"

With almost childish delight he spread the parchment before them, revealing its great array of records. Gone now from his mind was everything else. "You cannot imagine, my dear sir, how pleased I am. This document, although of no practical value, has been searched for, advertised for, through two continents. It has entailed a large expense upon me, and at one time I offered a small fortune for it."

"I congratulate you, sir! And I may add that, perhaps, having been the means indirectly of restoring the tree, I may also become the instrument for restoring its lost branch."

"Well said; I believe you will! My father had been dead some years before we had occasion to use this record, and then it was the search began. None of us thought of this hiding place, or, if we did, overlooked the document. Until Gaston came, I was about the only person who had access to it. I must take it down and complete the record, for my generation is the last that has been entered there. There are three brothers of us, Mr. Underhill, and one half-brother; but there it all is better than

I can explain." The part of the diagram pointed out was as follows:



"We keep only the Marbeaus and the direct line, the names being scheduled upon the back and margins of this document, as you perceive, with the names of the females who have entered the family by marriage. Richard, number 2818, was the half-brother, and 2819, 2820, 2821 stand for Gaston, Francis and myself." He bent over the yellow record with deep interest. Chilon's mind reverted to his own difficulty, and he could not arouse himself to the necessary attention. Who was that strange, half-remembered woman at the door? Her face haunted him! And the plates! In a few moments they would go out of the room and the door would be locked. But, no, was it locked when they came to it? He heard, absently, the voice of his companion:

"There is a little legend, Mr. Underhill, connected with the Marbeaus which this record recalls. In all the long list of names you will not find a 'W.' An Edward there was, and a William, away back, but that was before 'W' was used in the French. They appear as Edouard and Gil-

laume. Some one noticed this a long time ago, and soon we had a legend. How it originated I do not know, but the rhyme ran:

> When "W" enters the Marbeau tree
> Happy will the next bride be.

"There have not been many children, and it has so happened that they have been given family names. Nobody has seemed to care enough for the next bride to forcibly thrust a 'W' upon a child." And then Colonel Marbeau looked curiously upon his silent companion.

"You were saying," began Chilon, with a start; and then, remembering: "Yes, little Lena has given me the rhyme, and your prophecy that the locusts on the Marbeau trees have fulfilled the conditions. I trust you are right."

A dozen times over there had been upon his lips the inquiry, "Where is the wife of this Chilon, who has disappeared?" but he restrained it. The temptation was strong at that moment, but while he was waiting, Colonel Marbeau folded his precious manuscript and turned to him. It was evident that the interview was at an end, and the old man anxious to get back to the library with his treasure.

At the door, Chilon said:

"Pardon me; I will close the door for you." He did so. The key was there, but he did not turn it. But as Colonel Marbeau seated himself in his great chair, he stood by the entrance a moment, resolved.

"There was one point in your strange story you seem to have omitted; it may not be pertinent to the problem that we are to study and discuss, and yet it may be; your daughter, the wife of this Chilon Marbeau, is she——" His voice sounded strange and faraway from himself. His affected carelessness was a failure. The old man looked up in surprise, and for a moment did not reply. Then he said, simply:

"She is living. Did I not mention the fact?" Nothing more.

Chilon waited a moment and withdrew.

"I believe you did!" he said. The elder man gave his attention to the document, but something clung to his memory that would not be put aside; something suggested by sight of the man who had gone out of the room; a peculiar movement, or poise of head, or gesture, or outline, as he vanished through the doorway. Or was it the tone of his voice? An echo from a faraway time had sounded within him.

"It was very strange," he said, presently. But the document was a new delight. The thought, whatever it was, lost its importance.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE VOICE FROM THE PAST.

Chilon went forth into the woods and fields. "What next?" he asked of himself. His uncle's story had been told in detail, except upon the very point on which he most desired to be informed; and the plates were safe. But were they in reach. He would know that night. There was no longer anything to be gained by staying at Ravenswood. There had come to him in his mail no tidings of the man he sought. If he had appeared in New York as reported, he had disappeared with equal suddenness. For himself, there was nothing more but to carry out his contract at Washington, and that he would do. He was obliged not only by his promise, but by a new danger, for he was now known at headquarters, and while his safeguards still existed, he realized that this renewal of life among old scenes had filled him with much of the old misery and restored him to the mental condition of the man who had escaped from prison. The man who had faced the chief representative of the government secret service no longer existed. He had lost his nerve. The hand of an officer on his shoulder a week ago would have meant nothing; but now! His appearance would be a confession. He would go; and the sooner the better.

As he wandered on, his mind returned to Lena and the mystery that overhung her life. What was the meaning of his uncle's silence, of the boy Chilon's hallucination, of that strange, gray-eyed mulatto? Could it be that Lena was at Ravenswood and had recognized him? Was he known to both of them, father and daughter? It was a wonderful coincidence that he, of all men, should have been summoned to find himself.

No! It was impossible. Colonel Marbeau was no ac-

tor. And Lena would have come to him. She was simply an invalid, as stated, probably abroad or in some hospital. Only why this silence about her? And how explain the note?

One thing cheered him momentarily. The belief was general that a burglar had slain his cousin Richard. No one could suspect him but Lena; and possibly she did not. And so, happier than he would have believed, he came back to Ravenswood.

The evening passed slowly. Little Lena, curled up in a great chair in the parlor, was watching the swift hands of the visitor upon the ivories of the organ, and listening, entranced, to the sounds he awoke. Strain after strain, chord upon chord, harmony upon harmony, in infinite combinations, filled the room. Child as she was, the girl's eyes grew wet with tears. Some voice, some influence, some strange power, was at work in her young heart. Oh, if little Chilon were there with her! Colonel Marbeau, moved by the strange outburst of feeling, made known upon the vibration of the columned air, sat with his face in his hands, dreaming. The player's mood was inexplicable, unless the life that he had lived over that day, under the spell of his uncle's eloquence, was still with him. Unconsciously, after one great climax of emotion, while the echoes still filled the house, his fingers strayed absently into the notes of the plaintive little song that the child had sung to him. A voice from the past hovered near to sing. The duet began between the man who played and the voice that came vibrant from the vox humana of the organ. The beautiful combination at once aroused his listeners. It was a new experience, and never to be repeated, for one life would scarcely hold two such coincidences. For the man who played was before them, with compressed lips, pouring a torrent of passionate feeling from a man's heart; and the voice that sung was a boy's voice, clear and sweet, and full of the joy of loving, seeking expression through the hidden chords of his life,

joined by touch of hand and beat of heart to the vibrant air. It was a duet between the two natures of one man.

At the conclusion Chilon paused, exhausted. No music remained in him; the effort had been supreme. The room grew still, and the impassioned air within the pipes dozed off into vibrations too fine for human grasp—unless that sweetly-solemn rest that succeeds fine music is the overtone of it all caught by a sense as yet undefined. He seemed to feel a light touch upon his face. Lifting his bowed head, he saw, standing by the door, Lena Marbeau, the woman. Her eyes met his and caressed him with infinite love and tenderness. Then, as she stood, the love-look died out of her face as the sunlight from a twilight cloud. Her features became agitated. Swifter changes succeeded, until, distorted with fear and horror, it lost all beauty. She threw her hands above her head, and uttered a piercing shriek. Almost instantly the tall mulatto stood by her side, seized her wrists and drew her away. Chilon sprang from his seat, and caught blindly for support at the objects which swam in the scene about him. He felt himself seized and heard his uncle's low, sad voice:

"It was enough to startle any one, my dear friend. We owe you a thousand apologies."

"It was real, then!" Chilon shivered and looked toward the door.

"Yes. The lady is the wife of the man we seek to find, Chilon Marbeau. The air you played was a favorite with them both, and has drawn her from her apartments while her attendant, perhaps, slept."

"Her attendant! Does she require?——"

"Yes. She is insane."

"It cannot—it cannot be true!" The agony in his voice touched the old man deeply.

"It is true!" He could say no more for a moment, and then Chilon Marbeau, as in a dream, while he stood with the perspiration streaming from every pore, heard these

words: "Now you will understand why we must find Chilon Marbeau. For the best of medical experts have said that if his presence does not right her mind—she cannot escape the asylum. I had not thought to betray her misfortune, and our most sacred sorrow; but it was unavoidable. I trust now to your honor." The old man turned away, abruptly. Chilon, with his hand upon his throat, almost rushed from the room.

His presence had crazed her anew.

Whither he wandered, or how long, he never knew. His first realization was that he stood before Rose Cottage, his clothing soiled and torn, and Celeste was there, sewing by candlelight.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CHILON, THE BOY.

Two powers quarreled good-naturedly over the boyhood of little Chilon at Rose Cottage. Pierre, Celeste's maternal grandfather, out of fashion as a private teacher of the dead languages, had come soon after the tragedy at Ravenswood to make his home with her. A gentle, patient, impractical enthusiast, his instinct nevertheless recognized the singular purity and power of the boy's mind and its natural bent; and he determined to clothe it with all the beauties that he could command. It was to be his last work on earth, the dying effort of an intellect to perpetuate itself. Robert Aubren, sturdy and strong, had, for the sake of Celeste, taken the boy to his big heart. "Let him be a soldier," he said. "The country will need him some day." But later, he said to Pierre, sadly, "You have taught his mind ahead of the arm. He will never be a soldier." The prophecy was fulfilled, as was the prophecy of Pierre, when he foresaw in the slender limb and shapely head the beauty of Apollo. Beautiful, he grew, but his was more the beauty of the Apollo of the angels.

In the heart of Celeste love for the lonely child grew into an endless song that thrilled all life with subtle murmurs. Yet at all times there was a minor chord, a vague dread. She never chided him for his weird fancies. She could not divest her mind of the idea that somewhere around her watched an ever-present spirit. His strange eyes, that looked with intelligence and interest into the space of field and woodland, filled her with wonder, sometimes alarm. She dared not ask him if he saw anything there concealed from her. She half thought he did. It was at such times only that he smiled. A fleeting, delicate change came over his face, flickered, and was gone, as

suddenly as though the shadow of a passing bird had swept it.

Pierre was not so forbearing. He rebuked the child for his silence and his fancies. Yet with strange inconsistency he fed the mind on fancies. Chilon, as he grew, drunk in knowledge from the lips of the old teacher with a readiness and understanding almost incredible. Latin and Greek were nothing to him except that they held the treasure of the past. He resolutely declined to apply himslf to their acquisition. He was the sole auditor of an old man who himself delighted in them. At thirteen Chilon knew the Latin poets and had absorbed the beautiful fables of the Greek by word of mouth. In these he found his greatest charm. Mythology was at his tongue's end and he knew every god and goddess as other children knew fairy tales. Did he believe them? Implicitly. He dwelt upon Olympus and soon he found a little Ægean sea.

But Pierre did not have the problem many years; death sent him to the immortals, and Chilon, the boy, grew sadder, quieter, paler, as the reality of life dawned upon him. The mysterious wave of theosophy that had swept the country reached him and found him ready. The world became to him the playground of the mind, the crucible of the spirit.

It was upon the death of Pierre that the boy's character became more clearly revealed. In the hours of agony through which the dying teacher crept to eternal sleep he stood by the bedside, gazing into the eyes of him whose lips had broken the seals of his mystery and led him through the twilight of a bygone age. He did not leave the bedside while breath was in the pain-racked body, nor shed tears even when the light forsook the eyes fixed for the last time upon him. He turned away quietly and went forth then into the fields and forest. For three days they saw but little of him. The hearse came from the city and the body of old Pierre was laid away to rest by the

river. Celeste, in the solemn hours of that parting, had little time to bestow upon even the boy, but when all was over and the sunshine crept again around the silent cottage, she noticed him. He came and knelt by her side and laid his arms about her. Her heart was full. It had been a habit of his in childhood; but long since put aside. Looking down into his eyes instinct revealed to her something deeper than mere grief. Unconsciously, as of old, when he used to wake and listen in the long nights, she began to sing to him. Then the old passion deepened in his eyes, and his head, with its clustering ringlets, sank slowly, and rested on her breast. In that moment the soul of the woman and the strange, sad soul of the boy drew closer than ever before. Somehow she felt that he was more human than she had dreamed. It was not often that she questioned him of his wanderings; they were always innocent, and generally the insect or flower that he bore upon returning, told a straight story; but to-day, in sympathy over the loss that had fallen heaviest upon him, she asked him where he had been.

"At Ravenswood, generally," he said.

"Ravenswood!" She could not suppress the exclamation nor conceal her surprise—almost terror. "And what were you doing there?"

"I went to see Lena." Here was a revelation.

"Did you enter the house?"

"No, mother. I only go to the lake and the grove."

"And how did you meet Lena?"

"She came. I knew she would come."

For a long time the woman sat motionless except that her hand gently stroked the boy's hair. It was not entirely selfishness that had caused her to keep her boy from Ravenswood. A strange dread of the first meeting between him and her uncle postponed the hour. And there had been no difficulty in the avoidance. The reconciliation begun upon that fatal night, died in its inception by the perversity of the man. She soon found that

the wife, but not the husband, was to be welcomed at Ravenswood. The old aristocrat could not brook the thought of meeting Robert Aubren on equal terms; and her loyal heart took up arms again.

Lena, the woman, came from time to time and watched the boy develop, sitting by the hour often with her sad eyes resting upon him. And then a strange thing happened. There came a time when the sight of him drew forth floods of tears and passionate caresses, followed soon by a revulsion and a fear that was pitiful. There was soon a consultation at Ravenswood. "Nervous prostration," they called it. And a year before the death of Pierre, Lena had been taken to Uncle Gaston's in England for a complete change. After a while her uncle came back with the child; and Lena had been so much benefited, it had been thought best to leave her. So it was announced, the information after many days drifting to Rose Cottage.

What was now to become of her boy? Celeste asked herself the question as she sat over him that day. "Unfitted for companions or manual labor, without his teacher, and their library insignificant, what was he to do?" She met the issue bravely when she found that it must be met.

"Would you not like to go to the house, Chilon? There are great books, hundreds of them there that tell of many beautiful women and strange dreams——"

"May I read them?" he asked, eagerly.

"We shall see." She smiled sadly over his enthusiasm.

But when Robert was consulted he shook his head and made a suggestion so in keeping with her old fear that she keenly regretted for the moment her decision. Still, having awakened the boy's hopes, she would not disappoint him. She dispatched a note to her uncle, stating her wish, and it brought a hearty response:

"Let the boy come. The books are his to read,—as many as he likes."

She dressed him on the morrow in the suit that fitted his slender form so well, clasped her belt with the silver buckle about his waist, and crowned his curls with his jaunty cap. And so Chilon, the boy, came to Ravenswood.

It was a day of sunshine and beauty. Little Lena had not heard of his coming; with intuitive wisdom she had, from words profane dropped from time to time, gathered that the Aubrens did not stand well in Colonel Marbeau's opinion; and her acquaintance with the boy had not been mentioned. She knew, however, that in him there could be no blame.

Old Jerry answered Chilon's summons, took one look at him, and drew back as from a ghost:

"Lord, hab mussay!" he exclaimed; and then, "who you, honey; and what you want hyah?"

"I have come to see Colonel Marbeau," said the boy with dignity, "you will tell him that Chilon Aubren is here."

"No, I won't, honey! Ain' gwine tell 'im no Aubren hyah! You go in dat room deir whar de liberry is, an' tell 'im yo'sef." And Jerry, pointing the way, beat a retreat. The boy entered and stood in the broad doorway of the library, seeking with his grave eyes, fresh from the sunlight, to pierce the shadows. He stood for the moment, one foot half raised, his cap in hand. The silence deepened, and then the paper in Colonel Marbeau's hand rattled to the floor, and he arose. His face was pallid, and his eyes fixed in a stare upon the young form before him, while his labored breathing revealed a deep agitation. At that moment a girl's voice in song rang through the house, and, smiling, Chilon turned his face to listen.

"Speak," said the man, hoarsely, "who are you?"

"I am Chilon Aubren, sir!" Colonel Marbeau sank slowly into his chair and covered his face with his hands. A low groan escaped his lips. From time to time he lifted his head and gazed upon the slender figure.

"And your name is Chilon!"

"Yes, sir." The man nodded.

"Why, of course! You are Celeste's boy, I remember. Books? As many as you wish, my son; there they are all along the walls. I am not well, and cannot help you much,—but you are welcome, very welcome. Come closer and let me see you! Ah," he exclaimed, resting his hand upon Chilon's shoulder, "straight, well-formed,—but rather light for a soldier!" Chilon submitted to the examination in silence. The Colonel stroked his curly hair gently, and gazed tenderly into his eyes.

"You are like him,—very like him!—The uncle for whom you were named!" he said. Rising again he limped from the room. At the door, he turned.

"Excuse me, my son, and make yourself at home! I will send Lena to entertain and help you.—Lena!—Chilon!" He repeated the names. His chin sank upon his breast, as he turned away.

Lena came with glad, quick steps, and took both his hands.

"I am so happy," she began, and, noticing his eyes, "What is it, Chilon? Something is troubling you!"

"I do not know," he said, looking about him slowly, "I seem to hear voices." She listened intently.

"I do not hear them." He was gazing then intently upon her face.

"I seem to have stood here once before with you," he said, thoughtfully. She smiled at his words as she answered, confidently:

"That could not have been. But you will be here often now, and that is better!"

CHAPTER XLV.

DREAMS AND THE DREAMER.

With the assistance of his young friend Chilon drew down the volumes, and plunged into their mysteries. It was not long before he found congenial themes. A great book lay open to him, the wanderings in Egypt of that oldest of historians, Herodotus. With hands pressed to his temples, and his slender figure extended upon the floor in his favorite attitude, he read while the sunlight crept across the window sills, and the hum of the outer life quieted into midday repose. Little Lena would not interrupt him at first, but as time passed on she spoke. He did not seem to hear. Smiling over his absorption and happy in his interest, she wandered away. She threw open the organ and seated herself to play. Her highest talent would always be in music, and from infancy she had been taught by the best instructors. Few girls of her tender age, unless born for the art, would have equaled her execution. But behind her acquired technique was a strong heredity, a nature cast in harmonies, and to-day a peculiar environment. The silence, the presence of her strange companion, who had already begun to affect her sympathies powerfully; the memory of their woodland meetings and his sad spirit—all unanalyzed though they were—lent their influence to the hour. Her repertoire was not large nor difficult, but it embraced low, sweet and simple nocturnes, reveries and wordless songs—music that suited her best. As she played, unconsciously her soul went into the themes. The boy, the situation, and all were forgotten. Slowly, measure by measure, the mystery unfolded, wailed and died away, to rise again as her fancy changed. It deepened sometimes to sorrow; it sometimes rose to happier thoughts, it ended in a lullaby that seemed to sing itself asleep. To her listener, the

maginative boy, the music held the song of birds, the murmur of the forests, the wailing of the winds, the rippling brooks. They came and passed, obedient to the touch of her magic fingers. Nay, more; the spirits that had first spoken there came back and filled the room, dim, gray specters that moved with the stateliness of the valley mists, that turned their veiled faces upon him and seemed about to speak, but never did. Something held their lips dumb; they faded out in silence.

What had happened? Only this, the music had ceased.

And then, attracted beyond his power to resist, he went quietly and stood by the girl, who was resting one hand upon the organ, the fingers of the other slowly playing a soundless melody upon the still ivories. She looked up and met his gaze with a wistful smile.

"What is it, Chilon?" she asked.

"Sister!" He rested his hand upon her head and looked away with a troubled face.

"Oh, that is good of you, Chilon. I will be your sister." A faint smile flitted upon his face, but her eyes were wet.

"Mother told me once—once when she thought I was lonely—but crying as she said it, that some day I would have a sister. She always speaks the truth—always. Maybe this is what she meant!"

The girl smiled back happily to him.

"And I will be the best sister! Oh, Chilon, I am so glad!" His hand still rested upon her curls.

"Sister Lena!" he said, gently. "What a beautiful name. Shall I tell you what I dreamed while you were playing?"

"Yes."

"You remember the day I was listening to the waters that sung down in the valley—I could not tell you then. You were not my sister then."

"The day you went away so sad? Oh, yes. You didn't even say, 'Good-bye, Lena.'"

"It all came back to-day, for your music was the falling water and the ripple in the grass. They spoke to me as they did then."

"I could hear nothing," she said, sadly, shaking her head. "I never hear the voices that come to you. I wish that I could."

"But I can always tell you, my sister; and that is better."

"I don't know. The organ—the waters, have pleasant voices. I think, if they speak words, they must tell of pleasant things always. Do they not?"

"That day," he said, "as I lay I heard my name called. At first I thought it came from the wind, but I knew soon it was the brook. I bent and listened. Then it seemed to speak again. 'I know you, Chilon; many times your shadow has dwelt upon me, and many a time I have shadowed you. Do you remember when you were lying upon the grass in the field reading, the shadow of a cloud crept over you? It came with the wind that whispered, and, thinking something called you from the shadow you followed it until it crept over Ravenswood. It was a weary chase I led you that day, Chilon, but it brought you to the sister you have wished for so long. I am changed now. I fell upon the hills and have sought you through all the forests in vain. I have a message from a woman who came and dwelt one day with me. She loved you well, Chilon; better than you know. As we passed over you that day, and you followed the shadow, she wept, saying "he has followed shadows long, but it will not be always. Love will complete the dream." You thought her tears upon your face were raindrops.' That is what the waters said."

For a few moments neither spoke. Lena was thinking over his words, trying to reach their hidden meaning. Chilon was thinking only of the last words of the strange message he had received.

"Love completes the dream," he repeated, "but what

love?" She thought gravely upon this ancient proposition, and answered him.

"I don't know how to tell it, but I think, Chilon, if of all things the choice were ours to keep some forever, love would teach us how to choose." He nodded, well pleased at the reply.

"And you, Lena, what would you choose?"

She smiled confidently, looking into his brown eyes without embarrassment.

"I should choose Mamma and you!"

"I think, then, I must love you, Sister Lena. I would choose the same way!" She lifted her face, her eyes filling again, but a radiant smile chasing away the shadows.

"Perhaps, then, this is what the brook meant when it said, 'love completes the dream.' Are you happy now?"

"Happy?" He repeated the word softly. "I don't know what it means, Sister Lena; I think I will never know until the winds and the birds are silent, and the shadows do not fall." She did not answer this. Presently, noticing her abstraction, he said:

"And you—you are happy?"

"Yes. I am happy nearly always, and happiest when the breezes bring the bird's song and move the shadows on the ground; happiest now, when I am with you, and there are no troubles in your eyes."

"Why are you happy?"

"Oh, I don't know that! But I am not happy when Grandfather scolds me, and oh, so unhappy when I do not meet you. Did your Grandfather scold you?"

"Sometimes; but I went into the woods and soon forgot it." Presently she asked him, her voice sunk to a whisper:

"Do you ever hear his voice, Chilon?"

"Not to-day."

"Would you be afraid to die, Chilon?"

"No." He looked up, surprised.

"I would. It seems so strange to think of dying; so

lonely, maybe. We are here with our friends; we—die; we go, then, maybe, among strangers somewhere, and look for the poor we used to know in this life; we maybe can hear their voices, and feel them thinking about us, but we can't find them, and they can't find us." He looked at her, astonished and flushed with excitement. Without thought he placed his arm about her and drew her to him.

"You are the only one I have ever found, my sister."

"You think you knew me, then, in some other life. Oh, Chilon, is it, could it be true?"

"It is true!" he said, simply. He bent over her and pressed his lips silently to her forehead. "We will not lose each other again—while we live."

So into the life of the little woman, had Chilon come; and as the weeks passed Celeste questioned him. What if some day he never came back from Ravenswood? For the son of Robert Aubren was in the eyes of the world a very different personage from the grandson of Charles Marbeau. And when the day came for her to decide between her heart and the future of the boy, how would she decide?

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TIGRESS AND HER YOUNG.

Little Chilon had long been a visitor to Ravenswood. Celeste was in the cozy sitting room at Rose Cottage sewing by the light of a candle, that being sufficient for the work in hand. Lamps are oppressive on southern summer evenings. She was alone, her husband having been detained, as sometimes happened upon his necessary visits to the city. But, while lonely, she was not nervous, for although many years had passed since the war, and some sections suffered from the uncontrolled forces so suddenly emancipated, the negroes of the neighborhood were orderly and industrious. She was accustomed, too, to solitude and watching since death had removed her older companions. In the light of her candle, her dark oval face, with its fine, firm features, her black hair loosened for the night, her strong, supple form stood out of the shadow like a figure in some old Dutch painting. Grown older, she had not aged; time and the cares of wifehood and motherhood had only ripened all the promises of her girlhood. Woman as she was, and full of womanly weakness, her life had formed itself about passions as strong as chains of steel. Passions that at times sustained her when most women would have failed. Love was the controlling influence of her nature.

To-night as she sat at work her mind played host to memory. She thought of Lena. Many days had passed since she had sat with arms about her, seeking to recall again the confused and wandering mind, failing always, except to soothe and quiet. A stranger was at the house, his purpose unknown to her, and she disliked strangers. Her life had been spent in a narrow circle, and those who dwelt by her were sufficient. Instinctively she feared change and innovation. Nothing good to her could

come of change, and much might that would not be good.

While thus engaged, a slight sound drew her attention toward the open door, and there she saw standing, a man of soiled and disheveled dress and reckless expression. Astonished, and for the moment doubtful, she arose and stood waiting. The stranger glanced quickly about the room and entered.

"Pardon me, madame," he said, his speech nervous and hurried, "is this the home of Madame Aubren—Celeste Aubren?"

She did not move, nor for the moment reply. One clinched hand went quickly to her temple and remained pressed there tightly, a feminine gesture born of terror and peculiar to southern races. She looked about her; there was no escape outward, since the man was at the door. But it was not escape she sought. Her eyes returned to his face and remained fixed upon him, fascinated.

"Who are you?" she whispered, her bosom rising and falling in increasing agitation. The stranger averted his face for a moment, bringing the profile into view. When he looked again he was startled by the change in the woman. She now stood erect as though responding to a sudden call for decision and action, her eyes blazing with dread and excitement.

"You have come back," she said, her voice still reduced to a whisper, intensified by the feeling it carried. Chilon's decision had been but half formed; he hardly knew clearly why he had come to her. Indefinitely he had thought to see Celeste. Despair had brought him, as in the olden time unhappiness was wont to bring the boy. At the last moment the necessity for disguise had flashed over him, and he had made the effort weakly.

Her prompt discovery of his identity, due to his voice and profile, and the concealment by the shadows of his changed appearance, disconcerted and defeated him for

the time. He was momentarily speechless and embarrassed.

The revulsion that followed was natural to such a nature as his. It was due to relief. The load had slipped from him, and, although defeated in his plans, he was free to talk upon his life and its embarrassments. It is true even that for the moment, so marked was the change of feeling that came over him, he was almost happy. A half smile lit his handsome face, the ghost of the smile it used to wear, and, advancing, he stretched himself in a chair. He was Chilon—the old Chilon again.

But at the same time, his approach towards the light had revealed the lines, the changes which to her were autobiographies. She read as by a flash-light of long years of abandonment, of neglect, of heartlessness, of dissipation. She read also no good purpose in this home coming, no honorable return. It was not so, that her brother should come—in the night, soiled and ruffled and in disguise. Alarmed and shocked, her heart was in arms against him at once.

"Yes," he said, "and a strange greeting, considering that this is our first meeting in seventeen years."

His action, the easy nonchalance of his manner, for some reason, intensified Celeste's excitement. She glided across the room, and by a swift motion closed the door of the other apartment. Then, with her hand over her heart, she came back slowly to her chair, and stood by it.

He surveyed her bitterly, in silence, as she struggled for self-possession. Not a word of welcome, no touch of hands, even! She turned her face to his, and he saw that it was full of fear and distress, and that she was still trembling.

"What is it?" he asked, in genuine surprise. "What is troubling you so?"

With a supreme effort, she replied:

"I thought—you—were dead." And then, in a voice

full of agony, "Oh, Chilon, Chilon! why have you come back? Why have you come back?"

His amazement increased.

"Why? Well, why should I not come back? Do you know of any reason? Is there any reason why I should not come?"

And then, more gently:

"It may be that I have come back to see Lena—my wife. And, Celeste, I have come as soon as circumstances would permit. Is there anything in a man's coming back to his wife after a long absence to call for such—posing and heroics?"

Celeste regarded him in amazement.

"Your wife! To see your wife?"

"Why not? She is, in the sight of heaven, my wife! It has been many years, but I have come at last. I have come to you first—" She shuddered and turned away. Her sufferings began to affect him. He leaned back, and presently, in a vain effort to conceal his feelings, rolled a cigarette and touched it to the candle. Celeste had hidden her face in her hands; he waited for her to speak. As thus he sat, his eyes took in the furnishings of the little room. Many articles were familiar and suggestive of the unchanging conditions of the woman's life; the little clock that had been his mother's, the quaint vases, the few prints upon the wall. Among these he found a little photograph of himself as a young man, holding her infant, taken by a strolling artist in the olden days. As he studied it, the smoke disappeared from his mouth and the spark on the cigarette in the hand resting carelessly upon the table vanished in the gray ash.

"Your child," he said, gently, "where is your child?" She shuddered, but did not look up.

"In there," she said, in a whisper. The effort was painful. He could not guess her trouble, but he would calm her by forcing the conversation in that direction. Talk

to mothers of their children; he remembered the aphorism.

"Was it a boy or girl—let me see; I have forgotten?" She did not reply for a moment.

"A boy," she said at length, "a boy." Her words were just audible. She was trembling violently.

"Celeste," he continued, "what is the matter with you? I do not see why my presence should cause all this display of emotion. I came to you because—well, because I am in despair, and I had reason to believe you would still love your only brother—your nearest relative. I came to you for information, because I knew you were Lena's friend, and would know of her condition now. I have just heard—I have been told—there is no cause of alarm!" He pressed his hand to his face an instant and looked away. Celeste was now unable to keep her seat. She stood up suddenly, something of terror in her own eyes. She had misunderstood, and, bounding past him, placed her back against the dividing door. He watched her with undisguised astonishment. What was in that room? Why should she guard the door? Bewildered, his gaze wandered about him once more. Again it fell upon the little photograph. He looked from it back to her. Something told him the connection was there.

"I thought," he said, "it was a girl." And then, presently; "Why, Celeste, it was a girl! You named her Eloise for mother! Why! what is the matter?" She was just able to keep erect. Their eyes met. An idea never before entertained leaped into his mind along the hidden lines, and it seemed to her that she saw it dawn upon him.

He came to her quickly, white with excitement. His grasp, his passion, hurt her. The cry that escaped from her lips was a wordless expression of agony, mental and physical. It was, too, a confession.

But what a paradox is the woman heart! The cry of despair was instantly followed by calmness. It was as though she had suddenly emerged into a new light, a new

scene. She was no hypocrite; she could not dissemble; but she had blood within her that could fight.

The long-dreaded hour had come, and she had a weapon. She did not recognize his claim. He had been neither husband nor father, and the child was hers. She had raised it, had nested it in a motherhood as broad and as deep as love extends. As she had guarded it in the past, so would she now, and in the future. It should not be torn from her. The heartlessness, the violence of the man, although he was her brother, was apparent in his conduct to-night. Should her boy, her beautiful, tender, delicate and sensitive Chilon, be turned over to become a wanderer with this rogue, this criminal, grown gray in vice and dissipation?

Such were the thoughts that crowded tumultuously into her brain. He saw the change come over her; he did not fully realize it, but for the moment the woman was gone and a tigress stood guard above her young.

"Well," she said, answering the unasked question, "and if so, what of it?" Her face had lost the youthful lines; its fullness of contour was gone; it was square, almost, in determination and cruelty. The Austrian zealot had dawned upon a new century. As they gazed into each other's eyes, they seemed for a moment almost alike, one a darker reproduction of the other. He recognized himself, the uncompromising element of himself, in her, and unconsciously withdrew his grasp. She turned the key in the lock, placed it in her bosom, and went back to her seat.

Chilon witnessed this transformation with amazement, followed by admiration. But he was dazed and uncertain.

"It was true, then?" he said, in a whisper; it all seemed so strange, so awful. Never until then had he fully realized the ruin he had wrought. She made no reply. "It was true, then!" He answered his own question and

looked upon her, the wonder, the astonishment growing as he thought.

"Well," said she, coldly, "what of it?"

"What of it? What of it?" And then, bitterly: "A man returns after many years to find himself a father, and is asked 'what of it.' I came here to-night to see you, to talk of Lena, of whose illness I have but recently been informed——" Celeste started violently and lifted her eyes toward heaven. She was the only witness except Robert —"a man without prospects particularly bright, and I find myself a father, the legal guardian of an heir to a fortune, perhaps." His words and reckless manner crystalized her mood; she saw in this chance speech an intention he did not entertain. Her life had been too sweet and holy, too steadfast, to measure the weakness, the sorrow of his. Her whole manner showed her contempt. She had suddenly become in point of force as in all things else, the superior of the man.

"There is no fortune for the child," she said, quietly, "except such as Robert and I will leave. It is my child, and no one can prove it is not when I say it is."

He looked at her in astonishment.

"You would be the witness when the time comes," he said, quietly. Again she misunderstood him.

"You will hardly try that," she replied. "In the first place, the child is really mine, placed in my arms by its mother, and all claims released. In the second, I would perjure myself, if necessary; yes, if necessary to save my child, and if I were put upon the witness stand, I would hang you!" Poor Celeste! It was the agony of the mother striking blindly at the unseen dangers of the dark!

Chilon's astonishment was complete.

"You threaten me!" he began; but suddenly his face grew whiter, for she had arisen and was looking down upon him with a terrible menace in her eyes.

"Let me give you a piece of history," she said, with a forced calmness. "The child you once hoped for, but

deserted in advance, was born. There was no way to inform you at that time, for you had also deserted its poor, little loving mother. Your cruelty proved her ruin. You gave them a chance to say you were base, and Richard Marbeau took advantage of it. He deceived Lena, and, by working upon her sympathies, accomplished his purpose and married her. You know how they deceived her with the false reports of your crime. The little boy's coming had been concealed. He took the place of my poor little Eloise——"

"God in heaven! Chilon!" The man buried his face in his hands a moment, and then looked up quickly.

"Yes, Chilon! We could not make him a criminal's son; and after Lena married again—when the shameful deception practiced upon her became plain—well, she would not go before the world with the child and an explanation. Besides, he was mine. It would have killed me to lose him!" She sobbed a moment and returned to the subject with renewed passion.

"The time came when you returned to Lena, bringing her a new sorrow. She was happy for a while, though, and in her joy she brought about a truce meeting between uncle and me. She hoped for so much! I arranged to go to Ravenswood to meet you after that awful night, and did go."

"You!" Her face in that dark hall flashed again before him.

"Oh, Chilon! I need not complete the story!"

"Go on! Go on! Tell me all!"

"She gave me the room across the hall from your old room, and I was to wait until she had seen you and obtained your consent before coming in. We were going to plan your life over again, Chilon; we would have made you happy! But it was not to be. While I waited, I heard you struggling in the hall! I heard a pistol shot and that fearful cry—and running out I saw, framed in

the open window of your room, the most fearful picture a sister ever beheld. On the floor lay Richard, with blood already pouring across it, and over him were you with a knife in your hand! The lightning, which had been almost continuous, went out for a moment. When it flashed again you were gone, and lying there was only that cold dead thing that had a minute before been a man; while I, Celeste Marbeau—I who had loved you—oh, how I have loved you,—I was sister to a murderer!" she stood over him as she uttered these last words, her hands uplifted, her distorted face seeking to hold his.

Chilon trusted himself to look but once into the accusing eyes. He crept out from under them and picked up his hat. He fingered this absently, almost with imbecility. Then he looked back to her again. She was touched by the fearful face he had turned upon her; but she was pitiless. It was the tigress still whose cub was threatened.

"I know," she said, panting, and pointing her finger at him, "two of us have carried the scene in the memory for these four years; two of us will carry it to the grave! There was another there waiting for you; and she is still waiting, waiting in the dark; for the horror of that deed, your deed, put out the light of her mind and left her to insanity. You would hardly recognize her, but the beauty of that face survives. Would you like to see it again? Hush!" Her voice sank to a whisper. "Come! She lives in the child,—my child! God confirmed him to me for my share in that night's work. See, the door is open now. I will light the way. You can look into that face and maybe it will smile up to you again, as it used to in the old days. See, the way is clear now!" She threw open the bedroom door and caught up the candle.

Chilon, holding by the table, dazed and silent, was regarding her helplessly. "Come," she urged, showing her white teeth in a smile that froze his blood again, "if you are not the murderer of his mother and of Richard Mar-

beau, you need fear nothing!" And then, vehemently, "I challenge you to look upon that face!"

But her unanswered challenge marked the limits of her rage. Her life had been devoted to loving ministry. Something overcame her, some memory, or the immortal tenderness of womanhood. Her fury died before his speechless surrender. With a sudden revulsion she cast the candle to the floor and falling upon her knees, clasped her arms about him.

"Oh, Chilon! Chilon! To think that it was you—you who used to kneel with me—that it was you who brought about all this ruin, this misery; you whom she loved and trusted, and left home and father for—oh, Chilon——" She broke down and sobbed piteously.

The lighted candle was sputtering and dying upon the floor, but the moon shining through the window fell upon his ashen face. His voice was scarcely audible when he spoke again. It was as a voice heard calling from a storm.

"A murderer! A murderer! A murderer! It is known!"

He seemed to awake. Looking about him suddenly for the woman, he found her clasping his knees. He tore her arms from him with a strength she could not defeat, and glided out into the night. That one word, the word he had repeated, seemed to remain a thing of form—of vision, of actual being in the room. It seemed to take the man's place. When she lifted her head and looked about her, she was surprised to find him gone. Trembling, she arose, and tottered into the little room and sank on the bed, her arms about the child. And as if awaking from a hideous dream, her terror left her. She buried her face by the little sleeper's in the pillow.

"Chilon," she whispered.

"What is it, Mamma?"

"Nothing, darling. Go back to sleep," and, slipping an

arm about her as she knelt, he slept again. So Robert Aubren found them when he came.

She had not seen the white face of her brother at the window nor its agony, as, with her arms about the little fellow, she spoke his name.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HEART TO HEART.

When Chilon left Rose Cottage, he had but one object in mind; escape from the accusing eyes and lips of his sister. The realization that she had been a witness of the tragedy at Ravenswood, and that to her he was simply an assassin, and, as such, forever an outcast, came with resistless force. The subject had long since been put aside; he had explained to, had forgiven himself. He knew that except for the fatal resolution which had in his moment of irresponsibility arisen and taken possession of him, he was guiltless. And the resolution itself was human. What man would have rested under such wrongs? Now, two people shared this secret with him, two from whose minds he might never hope to explain away the fearful fact of the death. One had accused and denounced him; and the other?— He stopped in his wild flight, and threw himself down at the foot of a tree, burying his face in his hands to shut out the memory that came to him. He had destroyed with Richard's life the mind of his wife. Was not that what Lena said? It was true. She had gazed upon him from the parlor door, and the sight of him had evidently revived the horrors of that night.

There is a limit to the powers of misfortune. The mind finds at last a refuge in inability to receive impressions. If it does not give way it staggers blindly beneath its weight, seeing, hearing, accepting nothing until it had adjusted its burden anew. And so with the self-convicted man that night in the wilds of Ravenswood. Dimly, as he waited, almost in awe, for doubts of his own sanity had thrilled him, the facts of his life came out of the shadows and confronted him. He was a murderer, and Lena was crazed. She had had but one chance; she was to be confronted with the lover-

husband of her earlier youth, and if there was no revulsion strong enough to set up again the landmarks for her mind, it would wander forever. This was her chance. It had failed. To her in the one brief moment as she stood at the door, he had returned, not, however, in the halo of the sweet old romance, but cloaked in a tragedy too fearful for contemplation. What, then, was left for him at Ravenswood! What in all the world!

His mind, grown calmer, reverted to that closed and silent room at Rose Cottage. His son was there; her son! The thought moved him with a sudden joy. He was not to be alone forever. How he would work for, plan for, live for Lena's boy! He should never know what horrors lurked in his father's past. He would take him away, far beyond the reach of old associations, and teach him—what? The wretched man sank back again to the sod, from which in his excitement he was rising. He was a convict, an assassin! There was no escape from fate. Where next? Where turn for safety? For murder will sometimes out! The large reward was still standing. It came to him then that the prison from which he had fled was a refuge. In comparison, its old life, with no responsibilities, seemed sweet and restful. The world outside was dead to him; the prison was his best home.

But Garner! Instantly with that name his soul arose in rebellion. It was once more the saving stimulus.

It was midnight and the moon's broad disc now overhung the scene. Into the shrill chorus of the crickets and the monotone of the dewdrops from the leaves, there came a sudden hush, and then the slow sweep of garments upon the grass. He saw, standing near him, a woman, her white gown in reach of his hand. Was it some wraith, some phantom from a disordered mind? Who could come to him in that lonely place but the ghost of one of those dead friends he had helped to slay, waked from her grave in the fields of memory by the conflict

about her? He reached out his hand and touched the garment. It was soft and yielding. Still holding to it he lifted his eyes slowly, fearfully, until they rested upon her hand. It clasped a letter. With the other she was searching the depths of a hollow in the tree; and then his eager face was lifted higher, and he saw the pensive beauty of hers lit by the splendor of the moon. He reached forth and touched her hand, as he would have touched a lily.

"Lena!" She did not start or withdraw from him, but cast her eyes downward, as, kneeling, he leaned from the shadow of the tree and pressed his hot lips upon her hand.

"At last, Chilon; you have come at last!"

"At last!" His frame shook with the sobs he could not restrain at sound of her voice.

"It has been long; oh, so long, Chilon! You should not have treated me so. It was cruel. I loved you too well to have been treated so!" Her mind had lost the memory of its horror, but it might return at any moment.

"Ah," he said, "I, too, have suffered, Lena. God alone knows how I have suffered!" She rested her free hand upon his head.

"Your hair, it used to be black. Why is it changed so?" Her soft fingers lifted the locks gently and stroked them into place again. "It is true; you must have suffered. And yet suffering doesn't always destroy. Look how mine holds its blackness. Not a thread of white!" She took her hair in both hands, held it out at arms' length, right and left, and released it slowly. It fell behind her out of the moonlight like an escaping shadow. "You once thought it beautiful, Chilon!" Awed by her appearance, and the solemnity of this contact with insanity, the man arose and stood looking upon her. She laid both white arms upon his shoulders and placed her face near his. He could only fold his arms about her in silence and struggle to restrain himself. Any excitement

might be fatal. She seemed to be searching his face for a record.

"It is you, and not you," she said, puzzled.

"It is I, Chilon. Time has left its mark, but it is the same Chilon that has always loved you, Lena!"

"Loved me! You do love me! You will never love any one but Lena! I had a dream last night, Chilon, such a dream! I thought you came back and sang to me, sang the old songs we loved so; but when I looked for you I saw not you, but some one else there at the organ. I had so much to tell you, dear. You know that I am not always myself, my mind is sometimes confused, and I imagine such awful things!"

"Hush," he said, quickly, fearing that her excitement was returning. "Don't think of them to-night. Put away all troubles and let us talk of the happy days."

"Happy days!" she laughed softly. "Do you remember, Chilon, the day I came from school, and you met me; how we rode together from the city, and as we entered under the arch, you kissed me and said, 'Welcome again to Ravenswood?' That was a happy day. Happy? Ah, Chilon, Chilon, there is a happy day coming for you, too!"

"For me, Lena? Never, never again for me!"

"What! Come, follow me, and I will tell you something that will make you happy, Chilon. Come! come! come!" She glided away, lifting her skirts from the leaves, and beckoning eagerly.

"Lena, be careful!——"

"Come! come! come!" She eluded his grasp, and he could but follow, distressed and fearful. Once she waited with her finger upon her lips, a hand outstretched toward him.

"No, not here," she said. "No one must know, no one but you, Chilon!" She passed on quickly down to the lake, he following her light, sure footsteps until the water

was reached and she entered a little boat. Reasoning was of no avail. He tried persuasion. She was obstinate.

"I must; I must," she said; "don't vex me, Chilon, when I am going to make you happy! You will be happy, dear, will you not?"

"Yes, Lena. It is happiness to be with you!" Happiness!

She had the paddle, and with something of her old skill and ease, sent the boat gliding through the lily pads and moss far out, and up the lake; and ever as she dipped the blade she sang softly a lullaby, keeping time with her task. Her voice rose sweetly in the night, wailed and died away, and the paddle slipped from her hand and floated off, unheeded. She stood up; the frail craft rocked dangerously a moment, but it did not alarm her!

"Hark!" she said, "did you not hear him cry?"

"Lena, Lena! Of whom are you talking?"

"My baby, my poor little baby," she said, twisting her fingers together nervously. "Oh, you did not know, Chilon! Chilon!" She threw herself down at his feet, and buried her face in his lap.

"You never told me!" he said, hoarsely, "you never told me!"

"How could I? You never came, you never came! Oh, Chilon! he was a beautiful child, and I named him for you; nobody ever knew but Celeste. I gave him to Celeste—good, loving, beautiful Celeste. And so I lost him. I don't know, I can't remember why I lost him. They told me I must, and Celeste was so sweet and true. But now he is gone! Oh, Chilon, my love, my life, save me from myself! save my child! Bring back my heart, my brain, my soul! Everything is drifting away from me! I do not see anything but you; but you and the dear God's stars!" She was almost beyond control as she trembled in his arms.

"Listen," he said at last, in desperation. "I have seen him!"

"You! You have seen him? Why, Chilon, how could you have seen my boy, my beautiful boy?"

"To-night I went to Celeste, and we talked of the past, Lena, and of you. We talked of the good old days when we were children in these woods and upon these waters."

He turned away his face, overcome by the remembrance of the real scene.

"Well——"

"And she told me all. Then I went and stood above his bedside,—little Chilon's, and knew she spoke the truth." The woman clasped her hands, and leaned forward.

"You saw him! He was well? He did not lack anything? He did not call for me?"

"He dreamed of you, I think, for, as we stood he stirred, a smile came upon his face, and I heard him whisper 'Mamma.'"

"Did he? did he?" she exclaimed in an ecstacy of emotion. "My boy has not forgotten—my boy has not forgotten me! Bless you, Chilon, for those words. God bless and love and keep you, dear, in the hollow of his hand for the mercy, the tenderness, the beauty of those words!"

She was upon her knees with her arms about him, her emotion swaying them both.

Chilon sat with the tears streaming down his cheeks, too deeply moved to speak. He pressed her in his arms and gradually, by touch of hair and cheek, and mute caress of her drooping eyelids, he calmed her excitement. Presently she lay still in his arms, and relaxing them, her white face was revealed as carven marble in the strong, soft light of the moon.

A faint breeze was drifting the boat. He gave himself up to the hour and held her until it found a grassy harbor. He stepped forth then, and bore her toward the house. But at the edge of the grove he stopped and gazed upon that pale sweet face. Would he ever in this

life behold it again? Perhaps not. It were better not! Kneeling as he held her in his arms, he pressed his lips to hers, and then a moment rested his cheeks against the whiteness of her brow. No word was spoken, but in that moment his soul had said farewell.

The house was still. In an upper room burned a shaded light. Rising, he went in through the window of his room, up-stairs to her well known room, pushed open the door and entered. No one was within. The attendant's couch was there but had not been disturbed. He placed the sleeping woman upon the bed, removed the damp slippers from her feet and gently withdrew.

But at the head of the stair, the strangeness of it all forced itself back upon him. What should he do? Was Lena safe? Should he not inform his uncle?

A ray of light rested upon the wall near at hand. It streamed from the keyhole of the ballroom.

Chilon went to his room and gave himself up to thought. Events and emotions had crowded upon him swiftly and left him in confusion. It was difficult for him to realize that his meetings with Celeste and Lena had been real; that the climax of long years of waiting and planning had come and there was now nothing left for him but flight, silence and exile. The end was at hand.

His mind reverted to that inanimate form upstairs, his sleeping wife. He thought of her always as his wife. Was she still sleeping, and had that strange dark woman returned? Where was she? Ah! The ray of light! And the plates must be secured!

And so his mind came back to the demands of life. He arose and went softly up to Lena's room. The door was still ajar. He looked in. She still slept. The couch was still undisturbed. And then he went softly to the ball room door and listened. He could hear no sound. Alien, stranger, fugitive though he was, yet he was in his uncle's house. No one had a right to be in that room at such an hour but his uncle, and his own duty

was plain. Bending, he looked through the keyhole. Seated in front of the old desk, seemingly examining the papers thereof, her profile clearly revealed, was the mulatto woman. Chilon drew back amazed and alarmed. A sense, a thrill of a threatening danger came to him. Indignant he stood, and uncertain. The intrusion of a menial into the papers of his uncle Gaston, the neglect of Lena, called for action, but how could he act without betrayal of himself? In the eyes of the household what business had he to be wandering about upstairs after midnight, or at any time? There was one thing he might do. He might wait and perchance see what she brought from that room. Posting himself in the darkness below, and yet within easy reach of his own room, he stood on guard. Just before break of day the ray of light disappeared. He heard the door open and faint footfalls, with the swish of a woman's garments. She had passed out in the dark. He heard the closing of another door —Lena's he judged; then came silence. But just as he was entering his own room baffled, again the light flashed in the hall. The dark woman came down the steps as though searching for something. In her hand she held one of Lena's slippers. She touched a mud stain on the carpet with her finger, and seemingly satisfied, returned, and all was still again.

The indefinable apprehension continued. He had never felt it except when danger threatened him or some one in sympathy with him. What was it now? Was there some one near him in the hall, or was Lena in danger? The moonlight was visible through the front door's side glasses. Had anyone passed between him and them he would have known it. Slipping off his shoes, he went rapidly up the stairs. The ball room was locked. He listened at Lena's door; there was a confused murmur of voices, and it seemed to him he could hear Lena's in pleading tones. For the second time in his life he found a chair and, standing upon it looked through the transom. Lena lay in bed, but she had half

raised herself upon one elbow. Her face was not entirely visible, but her manner was that of a person controlled by fear and mental agony. Her eyes were fixed upon the face of the mulatto. This woman stood fronting the door, her every feature distinct in the light of the lamp that she held. She was pressing upon her recumbent patient a glass half filled with black liquid, her whole interest and attention fixed upon the upturned face. The scene was a striking one, but connecting itself as it did instantly with a memory, to Chilon it was intensely vivid. In this memory, the woman with the black draught took the place of Silvy, and the pleading, shrinking form in the bed was his own. He looked again into the mulatto's face, fascinated. The sick woman shrank in horror from the dose—physical nature, overruled, overwhelmed as it was, in her being, shrank and protested with all its power against—what? Something utterly at war with it. But mere physical nature submitted to a power exerted through a perverted reason. The king was dead, but habit sat on his throne. Chilon knew what would follow: the fragile form upon the bed would shiver and be convulsed, the face would turn away sickened and distorted; but at last the hand would arise obedient to the will of the woman who stood, and receive the drink. So it had been with him; and so it would be with the sick woman. Then into her mind, as she slept, would come fancies and visions. Hallucinations would distress and tumult—yes, that was how it had been with him—always. And when the woman had subdued her to a mere automaton, she would put her finger on some old resolution, hidden away in her brain cells and awake it to life and revenge.

He shook his head angrily that his mind should so outrun his judgment at such a time and in the presence of such a scene. Lena was sick with a nervous malady. The woman was her nurse and attendant and must perforce administer medicines. He was preparing to withdraw from his position when he received a shock that

almost caused him to lose his hold; Lena, on the bed, fell back, tossed her arms feebly and lay throwing her head from side to side; but the mulatto woman, relaxing her fixed gaze, looked down upon her, laughing silently. The wretched man, his blood chilling in his veins, and covered with a cold perspiration, descended, trembling, from his chair and crept down to his room. He locked the door and lit his lamp. Seating himself, he looked fearfully about him. One word had flashed into his mind and lay at the base of this new mood. The word was "poison."

And then began a mental struggle that was to continue for many hours. Why should this strange woman attempt the destruction of Lena Marbeau? She was a skilled and trained nurse, probably engaged at large expense. There was positively no grounds for suspicion. And yet why should the sad scene he had witnessed bring a smile, a flash of triumph, of pleasure, to her face?

There was something dark and mysterious in the situation; but he was powerless. It flashed upon him, too, again, that the strain upon his mind might have unbalanced it for the time being. After all, was it a smile, a silent laugh upon the old woman's face? He had seen persons administer medicines and unconsciously imitate the gagging and choking of their patients. That was the explanation.

But yet! And so the mental battle went on.

"My dear sir," said Colonel Marbeau at breakfast, "you will pardon me, but your insomnia is playing havoc with you. Is there anything I can suggest?—"

"Nothing, thank you. The fact is, I thought the quiet would affect me pleasantly. It has the opposite effect. If you had a few busses to run up and down the road, some street cars and a lot of people to tramp around, perhaps it would help." Chilon forced a smile to accompany this.

The colonel was interested.

"I can arrange it, if noise is all you wish; I think a couple of wagons outside;—but that will not do. Quiet is

absolutely necessary, Mr. Underhill, I had forgotten." The old gentleman's sadness returned. "You understand?"

"Perfectly." And then, after an awkward silence: "Colonel, I wish to ask you a question, but am afraid you will think me intrusive; still if,—"

"Proceed, sir. I will determine afterwards."

"This nurse who has charge of,—the lady; is she a foreigner?"

"She came back with her from England,—yes." Colonel Marbeau looked curiously at his guest.

"And this—insanity; is it persistent,—no lucid intervals? I do not question from idle curiosity, but you have given me a great problem, and the answer may come from things overlooked, perhaps."

"There are not exactly lucid intervals, I think; but there are times when my child seems clearer. That is all!"

"When you took her abroad was she this way?"

"No; or else it was in the earlier stages. She was very nervous and suffered from indigestion and insomnia. All physicians advised a trip abroad. We went to England and to my brother's. It was there we engaged this nurse."

"And then she grew worse?"

"Yes."

"So much so that you had to bring the woman with her when you came back?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Do you know anything of the history of the woman?"

"Well, sir! well, sir! what else?" The colonel arose impatiently,—but instantly his mood changed. He turned quickly and offered his hand.

"Mr. Underhill, I am an old man! Nothing more should be necessary in the way of apologies. We all have our weaknesses. No man before ever asked me three questions about my family affairs in succession and got a polite answer to the last, and I have answered a

dozen for you. Come, let's go out and smoke!" Chilon shook the proffered hand and bowed gravely.

"Enough, Colonel," he said, "but if you knew why I asked the questions you would forgive them, I am sure, and answer them!"

"What do you mean?"

"If I answer that you will ask a more difficult one; but if you will be content to wait before asking the second until the day I leave you, I shall answer it."

"It is agreed."

"Then," said Chilon, earnestly, "as I stand before you and must some day stand before my Maker, I believe that were your daughter taken from the company of the mulatto woman, she would recover."

"Why—"

"I may not answer that;—and you were not to ask."

"It is impossible, impossible, im—" The word grew fainter and fainter upon the old man's lips. Chilon had walked to the end of the veranda to avoid the difficulty pending. When he turned, Colonel Marbeau, supporting himself with a chair, was looking toward him, his face pale and drawn.

"Well!" he said. His companion's lips moved but made no sound.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

NATURE'S CLARION CALL.

The two men avoided each other that day. Some satisfactory course of reasoning restored Colonel Marbeau's equilibrium, if not his peace of mind. He was quiet, but thoughtful and watchful, going several times to the room upstairs, a proceeding so unusual that it attracted every one's attention. He returned each time more assured.

Chilon gave himself up to the woods, seeking quiet for his nerves and mind. How could he secure those plates, to him so vital? He would not go without them, and go he must.

Late in the afternoon, he came upon little Lena and the boy. Below the dam, the sun was shining through the spray where the waters going over made a rainbow; and there they were wisely settling the philosophy of the phenomenon to suit themselves. They greeted him, the girl, with a smiling face, but her companion with a gravity that was almost embarrassing. Upon him, Chilon gazed with profound emotion and sadness. He read confirmation of the truth that had been told. Indeed nature herself on his every outline and feature, in the movement of his limbs and the poise of his head confessed to him. For there with himself he saw, blended so perfectly that analysis was impossible, the vision of the past that for so many years had haunted his dreams. He bowed his head in silent depression. When he roused himself both children were regarding him intently, expectantly. He forced a smile and said:

"The sight of you, my young friends, happy in each other's company, recalled to mind scenes of my own youth. I, too, was a boy in the country once, and my best friend, the friend who best loved me, was a little girl,—just your size, Lena. We were very happy, very

happy then." He looked away, having said more than he intended.

"Where is she now?" asked the girl.

"I lost her," he said softly. "She passed out of my life."

"Did you love her, Mr. Underhill? You must have loved her, though." She was looking compassionately upon him as she spoke.

"Yes. I loved her!" Chilon came and stood by him, with grave, questioning eyes fixed on his. He did not speak, but his slender hand slipped gently into the man's. The little action, the quick, pure sympathy, almost lost the man his presence of mind. He restrained himself, and turned the subject.

"You were looking at the rainbow. Isn't it strange that the ancients could ever have been superstitious about it when every waterfall possessed one?"

"You should see this one by moonlight," said the boy. "It is then a ghost. The beautiful colors are faint and all you see clearly is the salmon,—the colors in the ring around the moon. The vibrations of the other colors are not visible."

"Still vibration," said Chilon, smiling, "you are committed to your subject, I see. Well, it is a beautiful study."

"Sometimes it is not," said the boy. "Vibration destroys as well as beautifies. This dam here has been hurt by it. Where the water falls on the boards below the gates there is a trembling that has opened cracks. Look yonder, sir, how some of them leak. See the bottom one; the water there is muddy." The man looked and was instantly impressed. Years had passed, but the experience of his own youth returned. He recognized in that muddy jet, a serious and pressing danger to the dam. The jets of clear water escaping between the wood work meant nothing, but muddy water boiling underneath was a different matter.

"That must be seen to," he said gravely, "and at once.

The gates should be opened to their fullest and the pressure relieved. Wait and I will get help. Thirty minutes may cost the price of a dam, to say nothing of damage to crops below." He looked with alarm at the twelve-foot head of water pressing upon the weak spot, and hurried off toward the house for help.

"Keep out of the way," he called back; "there is danger below the dam."

The young people stood aside and waited. The minutes passed rapidly and with each the boiling leak increased. All the clear water below the dam was now turbid and discolored. The leak had found a voice, too, and disaster hung in the air.

"The gates must be opened," said the girl quietly. "There is no one else to do it; let us try, Chilon!" He drew her back with quick and anxious protest, walked bravely out upon the bridge, and, adjusting a lever, made an effort to lift a gate. It was the work of two men; he could not move it. He was looking about for a longer lever, when without warning, the wood work which blocked the thirty-foot opening gave way. The great beams and timbers plunged downward, ripping and crashing, standing on end or thrown back into the air; and Chilon disappeared in the wreck. The man returning upon the run, stood for a moment opposite the little girl, their faces white as death, the tumultuous flood pouring between them. Their lips moved, but made no sound that was audible above the roar of the flood. She knelt in agony and tears, and pointed down the valley, and looking there, the man saw a forest of small gums a hundred yards away bending and dipping as the flood roared among them; and clinging there bravely, mutely, desperately, the slender lad. For the first time he heard within him that clarion call of nature, never sounded except when danger threatens an offspring. It was a new, a wild alarm! He did not cry out; he cast himself into the flood and passing grasped his son. The shock broke his frail hold and man and boy went down the

black valley together. What happened in that frightful journey he never knew. When consciousness came back to him he was kneeling in the mud and debris, gazing helplessly into the boy's face, over which the blood was pouring from a temple wound. The negroes came running to his help and then he saw the little girl bending, awestruck and remorseful, above her companion, but calmly and with the deliberation of a hospital nurse, binding up the wound with her apron. The dam had broken. It all came back upon him. He turned and looked up the valley strewn with the wreckage left by the receding waters. How could he have lived through it with that boy in his arms? How could either—

Had the boy indeed lived?

With a cry that thrilled the rude but sympathetic hearts about him, he threw himself upon the inanimate boy and implored him to come back to life, to love, to him. It was a torrent of feeling poured forth. The barriers within had broken away and the flood swept all before it. The little crowd stood about looking down upon him and his grief in amazement and silence. They pitied him for his suffering; they loved him for his sorrow. In the presence of that tumult little Lena's grief was hushed. It was secondary. She could not understand the cause, but there was no mistaking the fact. Insensibly drawn to him she placed her hand in his, nervous and trembling. The boy coughed and choked, then sighed back into silence. In an instant more, with a strange, inarticulate cry, Chilon had him in his arms and was rushing toward the house. At the brow of the hill he met Colonel Marbeau, greatly distressed, and they went in, together. But as, bearing the senseless form, Chilon crossed the rose garden, a woman appeared for an instant at the upper window and gazed with straining eyes upon the burden he bore. The boy's white face was upturned, his wet hair hanging down in disorder, his clothing torn and bloody. A piercing shriek rang through the house, followed by another and another, and then the sound of a

sharp, fierce struggle. A moment later, when the wounded boy had been carried into the guest's chamber, with disheveled hair and face full of fear and horror, Lena, the woman, burst into the room, crying:

"My boy! My beautiful boy. Who has done this? Who has killed my child?" She cast off the pitying hands that both men placed upon her and threw herself down by the little fellow's side, calling upon him frantically to speak to her, his mother. And ever as she called upon him her lips covered his face and hands with kisses and pleaded with him to look upon, to speak to her. Tears were streaming from the eyes of the two men who witnessed the scene and from those of the servants who crowded around the door silent and sympathetic. Only Chilon understood. With the others it was insanity. The tall mulatto woman angrily forced her way through groups at the door and advanced to the side of her patient; but at that moment the boy, opening his eyes, had fixed them in wonder upon the face above him. The light in them grew soft and melting and a rare smile came unto his lips. Acting instantly upon a mental suggestion, Chilon, the man, stepped to the bedside and put aside the nurse's hand, pressing her back. The woman stood looking upon him amazed and indignant, but he paid no attention to her, except that for the third time she attempted to reach the kneeling woman, with unconscious violence he thrust her far away.

"Look!" he said to the colonel, whose face was turned to him in surprise. He pointed to the woman and boy as he spoke. Some powerful change had come over her at sight of the new, the loving intelligent look in his eyes. "Will some one bring me camphor and a towel?" she said in calm and natural tones; and when these were handed she began to bathe the discolored face and wipe it dry at the same time giving, calmly, directions, for further service.

"Go to the little room and bring me the blankets from the closet. Jerry, bring me a basin of warm water and

some clean linen cloths—tear a sheet if you can find nothing else." And soon, removing the bloody bandages, she began intelligently to cleanse the wound and dress it.

The two men standing guard over her looked into each other's eyes joyful and triumphant. The mulatto seized this moment to catch Lena's eye and attention.

"Come," she said, with quiet authority. Shivering, Lena looked upon her, distressed and uncertain, but before she moved, Chilon, taking the woman by both shoulders, whirled her out of the room through the group of astonished spectators and forced her up the stairs.

"Do you know me?" he asked sternly, almost savagely, as he released her.

"I do not," she said, unterrified and defiant.

"It does not matter," he added, excitedly; "but I shall stand on these steps to-night and if you descend them you do it at the peril of your life! He was full of emotion and hardly conscious of what he was saying. The woman looked upon him in wonder and withdrew. Chilon reached the bend of the stairs; there was an outcry below, and Celeste, an unchained tigress, burst in upon the company. "Where is he? Where is my child?" she cried, her voice ringing through the house and thrilling them with the fear and pain it carried.

Chilon drew back and waited. Here was an issue he had not foreseen. He dared not go below.

The little girl going up to change her dress, passed and he did not see her, as for the moment he sat upon the stair, his face within his hand. She paused a moment by his side and then, respecting his grief, continued on. In her mother's room she found the lamp by the window—for it was then dark without—and taking it went into her own little room adjoining and began her toilet. Her clothing was wet and stained with mud and the blood of her little friend. She had scarcely finished, when the mulatto woman entered hurriedly from somewhere and angrily seizing the lamp, restored it to the other room and its first position.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE MULATTO.

When Celeste rushed into the room below she gave one quick glance at the scene and threw herself down beside the bed, seizing the limp hand of the boy and straining her eyes into his blank white face. By this action Lena was displaced.

"Celeste!" she said, her voice full of emotion and reproach, "Celeste! Celeste!"

"He is mine," said the woman, fiercely. "No one shall take my place! Chilon, my child, my precious, my little love, look up, darling,—ah, see, he knows me—he lives!" The boy indeed opened his eyes at that moment and gazed affectionately into her face. And then turning, he let them rest with love and awe upon that of the other woman. A smile swept away the uncertainty, the confusion. Closing them again he breathed deep and slept. Lena buried her face in the bedding and gave herself up to sobs, dry and inarticulate sounds, and except for these, silence fell upon the room.

And then came Chilon to the door and beckoned Colonel Marbeau outside.

"The boy!" he said and could ask no more.

"He is all right, I think." The other man's lips moved in prayer.

"Do not disturb her," he said at length, pointing to the sobbing woman. "I believe it is the crisis. If she does not come forth clear from this, she has no chance."

"We shall see," said the colonel. "I have sent for physicians. You may be right."

Chilon went back to the bend of the stairs in the shadow. It was his safest place while Celeste was there.

An old struggle in the mind of Celeste was renewed as, her fears decreased by the boy's sleep, she knelt and wait-

ed. She knew that the little fellow was separated from his inheritance as long as she held his secret, and that never, unless she took the initiative, would there be an explanation. She was the stronger of the two women. If she pressed upon Lena the interests of the boy and insisted with determination that he be given his rights; nay, if she but released Lena of her promise his history would be told regardless of the facts in the life of Chilon, the elder. She alone of all the world, stood between him and his welfare. It was a cruel thought. What had she done in all the long years to reap such a sorrow. What indeed! Only those years with their weight of love for the boy rose before her. She was innocent; yet she realized that the finger of fate in tracing his, had written sorrow across her life. She tried to picture him living at Ravenswood, and coming to visit her. She saw in fancy the visits, frequent at first, grow less so. She saw the love that bound him to her weakened and supplanted by new pleasures and dignities, and by other loves as time went on. It was ruin for her!

"Not yet! Not yet! Oh, not yet!" she cried aloud, and clasped the boy to her heart again.

Then came little Lena, grave, silent, and alone. She passed the group about the door and standing between the two women, looked lovingly upon the face of her friend. It was a compromise. They did not repel her. Celeste, giving up her place, went around and reclined upon the bed, her cheek next to the moist hair of her boy. As she lay she watched the little girl's face, beautiful in that dimly lighted room. Strange thoughts came, memories that shook her heart. Tears came, too, and fell upon the pillow. Little Lena saw them.

"I think he is sleeping, Cousin Celeste," she said. "He does not suffer!" Celeste turned gratefully toward the little comforter.

"Yes, I know, dear. But I was not thinking of that!" The elder Lena had fallen asleep, her face hidden in her arms. It was the reaction of excitement. Psychologists

might have attributed it to the same power that soothed the sufferer.

"She is tired," said Celeste, softly looking upon the silent mother. "Do not wake her. Are you not tired, my child?"

"Oh, no. But you are, Cousin Celeste! Leave him with me. I will awake you if he should stir and need anything. I am not at all tired."

"I will wait with you, dear. The doctor will come soon."

Satisfied that the danger had passed the group about the door dissolved slowly and quiet reigned. The gentle soughing of the winds in the trees was distinctly audible, the first murmur of a storm. It seemed to little Lena that they called Chilon's name. The candle burned dimly and no sound broke the stillness of the room except the sleeper's low breathing. It was very still and solemn. After a while she did that which those who move in the cold, false world outside would have smiled over. She ran one arm under the boy's neck so gently that the action did not awaken him, and laid her cheek by his, on the pillow. Looking into Celeste's eyes presently she smiled and closed her own.

The candle burned itself dimly into its socket. Celeste presently arose, and tenderly as a mother lays her baby to sleep, she unclasped the little girl's arms, lifted her tired frame in her own, took her across the hall and placed her upon the library lounge. Coming back, she spoke gently to Lena.

"Lie down beside him, dear. He is all right now." There was in the air the stillness of repose and Lena, looking once about her, succumbed to the new, sweet peace that soothed her senses, and sinking beside her boy, slept again. The other woman, her face radiant with the light of a great soul triumphant, kept watch above them.

Assured by occasional visits of the safety of the little patient, Colonel Marbeau, upon the porch in his great

rocker, dozed and awaited the long delayed physician. Robert Aubren had come and received assurance of the boy's safety, but declined a cordial invitation to remain.

The physician arrived at last, dressed the wound more carefully, and administered an opiate. With quiet and repose all would be well. He adjourned to the veranda for a cigar with Colonel Marbeau. It was too late to return to the city. A storm had developed. The patter of raindrops had begun and the vivid lightning was bursting asunder the darkness of the glades. The wind murmurs had deepened. In the far distance the approaching storm rolled its sullen warning.

In the meantime, Chilon kept watch at the turn of the stairs. Twice the mulatto attempted to descend, but each time was sternly repulsed. She pleaded the duties of a nurse and the necessity for administering medicine without avail. Then she gave way to rage, shifting the shawl upon her arm and glaring at him like a chained beast. His quick eye caught sight of a dangerous knife half revealed. Catching her wrist he wrenched the weapon from her grasp and held her. Baffled, she stood silent, looking upon him, and then, with one fierce, quick struggle that would have succeeded had his strength been tripled, broke his hold and disappeared in the shadows above him.

Chilon was now in a predicament, from which he knew not how to escape. To face Celeste would be fatal to his plans. He was uncertain as to Lena. Yet either might at any moment ascend the stair. On the other hand, if he abandoned it, he abandoned his protection of Lena; for her safety, he was convinced, depended upon his breaking the chains that in some way had been forged for her by the yellow woman.

The situation could not remain unchanged much longer. In the morning what would happen?

The house grew quiet, except for the monotonous sound of the men's subdued voices on the veranda. In his own room all was stillness, for Celeste sat brooding

above the sleeping forms of mother and child, their faces almost touching upon the pillow. If any one else was up about the house the quiet was not disturbed.

But others were up. Chilon, sitting on the stair, was suddenly made conscious of the fact by the flashing on the wall of that telltale ray through the keyhole of the ballroom. Again that strange woman was at work with his uncle's papers, searching. This time he would ascertain her motive. He would not wait until the light was extinguished, but go in boldly upon her regardless of consequences. If she dared to raise an alarm it would be worse for her than for him, when the master came. But while he was debating and deciding the light went out. He sprang up the steps a moment too late. Again near him he heard the rolls of thunder, the opening of the door, the low swish of a woman's garments and then her almost inaudible footsteps, as she passed away. He turned and followed. There was no need for quiet. The storm was at hand.

The woman preceded him down the hall past Lena's door. He saw her distinctly in the sudden glare of the electric fluid, and hesitating but a moment, he followed on. Then the door of his own old room opened and the woman entered. It was a room that for him held both sweet and awful memories; but now it held a mystery besides. For what possible purpose could the mulatto be entering that room? He had put his hand to the plow and would not turn back. Throwing the door wide open he stepped boldly inside.

CHAPTER L.

MEMORY'S FLASHLIGHT.

For the moment it was as dark as a moonless midnight; but dimly through the open windows he saw the lashing trees. Could it be possible that the woman had issued that way? He ran to the window; but at that moment there were behind him quick footsteps. He turned, quivering with excitement and dread. The hour, the scene, the thought of that night four years before, combined, destroyed his nerve and suspended judgment. The approaching footsteps thrilled him. Before he had whirled in his tracks he knew that an enemy was there and upon him. He had turned, panic-stricken, unprepared for any danger. What he saw in the transient flame of the lightning was a man, knife in hand, rushing toward him. He himself had a weapon; the one taken from the woman. In the dumb weakness of his amazement and terror, he raised his arm. He could not have struck; mind and body were almost paralyzed. The weak action was mechanical, a mere instinctive effort of the animal. This the stranger could not have known, but he was apparently merciful. He hesitated one instant at what he saw, struck down the hand with a quick, sharp blow, dashing the weapon to the floor. Springing through the window he rushed across the narrow roof, cast back one quick, frightened look upon the scene he was leaving, and plunged headlong through the tree to the ground. Chilon made no attempt to follow; he stood looking upon the fallen knife which, now open, was shimmering mute echoes of the incessant lightning. The likeness of the scene to that of memory was perfect. The man—was there a man? Had any one passed him? Did he dream, or had reason fled? His quick, full pulse beat

fiercely in his bruised and swollen hand. That was no dream.

Then upon the palimpset of the mind where fate was writing anew, shone vividly the lines of an old record once almost effaced. He gave forth a great wordless, meaningless sound, a cry that rang through the house and brought the watchers below to their feet. Again and again it sounded, and fearfully they came to where he knelt. They found him, his face white in the light of their candles. The two women, after the first moment, stood looking upon him, Celeste mute and determined; but Lena, uttering his name, and hesitating a moment longer as though doubting the vision, threw herself upon him, repeating it again and again.

"I am innocent, innocent!" he cried. "Celeste, I was not the man! He was here; I have seen him! Again he struck my knife to the floor! I am innocent, innocent!"

"What is this? Chilon? Who calls Chilon? Who are you, sir, that answers? Celeste, take your cousin to her room!"

Greatly agitated, the colonel was advancing, feeling for his glasses as he came.

"Let no one touch her; I answered to the name. Time and misfortune have left but little of the Chilon you once knew, but I am he. Lena, look up! It is indeed Chilon, unchanged in the love he bore you—all unchanged in that!"

The colonel laid his hand upon his shoulder and looked intently into his face.

"You—you are Chilon Marbeau?"

And then in the silence that fell upon them all as the old man sadly studied the face, again came his conclusion. "If it is true, you have paid a debt, my boy; the record is there."

"And a debt that bankrupted youth, uncle. I came back to your house because the temptation to be with you all again, to see this dear one here, and hear her

sweet voice, was irresistible. I came to you unknown, as I came four years ago unknown to this room, this spot—"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, a fugitive, I lay in old Silvy's cabin, delirious with fever, my mind full of the wrongs done to me by Richard Marbeau—"

"No, no! Speak quick—you did not, you did not!—"

"Urged on by her suggestion, armed by her, crazed and fearful for Lena, I came here to this room and when I recovered my senses for a moment, I stood above the body of Richard, my knife by his side upon the floor. I fled. When reason returned it was all like a dream to me, the tragedy, the scene. I seemed to have killed him. Others thought me guilty; I fled back into the world. But to-night I followed here the woman nurse, taking from her this weapon, which she would perhaps have used upon me. As I turned back from the window, a man rushed upon me, struck down the weapon and completed the memory of that terrible night. For, as heaven is my judge, I saw him dimly then as I saw him to-night; and when I stooped to pick up the knife I touched Richard's blood. It is true—Celeste—Lena—Uncle—I swear to you it is true!"

"I believe you, dear! Lena believes you!"

"Lena!" They crowded about her in wonder and gazed into each other's faces, doubtful, but rejoicing. The reaction had come to the bent and wearied mind. Its shadows were gone.

"I believe you, dear. I have known it a long time. Celeste told me it was not you."

"Celeste!" The brother looked quickly to the poor woman. She knelt before him.

"But not in time. Forgive me, Chilon; forgive me! I could not give him up then! You owe me forgiveness, brother! I have been a mother to your son; no child ever had a more loving, a more devoted mother! When I deceived her, I seemed to be defending him. And

while you did not strike the blow, you were with him!"

"You, too, saw the man, then?" He could not realize it.

"Yes! For one instant! As you entered the window and lifted your hand to strike, Richard fell dead and this man dashed you aside and escaped. It is true! I told them a tramp did it; but I let Lena think I was shielding you. I deceived you. You would have taken my boy! I have suffered." He lifted her and passed his free arm about her.

"Who am I, sister, to forgive? Say no more!"

The colonel was speechless over these rapid developments, but one sentence set him trembling with excitement.

"His son? Chilon's son! Where is Chilon's son?" Lena, breaking away from Chilon's clasp, threw herself upon his breast and hid her face there.

"And yours?" he whispered. "Chilon's and yours?"

He read the truth in the faces about him.

"Where is this—child?"

"Oh, father," said the woman, "it is not clear to me; but if I have not been with him to-night, if I have not lain by his side, his cheek to mine, then indeed am I lost!"

"What! The boy Chilon! Do you mean the little boy?"

"Yes. It is her son, uncle," said Celeste; "born in that first sad year of her married life. She gave him to me because—well, because she thought it for the best. And after awhile it was for the best. You would have known it some day; I would have told you!"

Lena, with sudden return of memory, for the boy's condition, had glided out of the room; and, still a little uneasy on her account, Chilon followed. They entered the room below together. Little Lena, with pale face and eyes full of unsubdued terror, knelt by the sleeping boy, her arm under his head. In the few minutes of her mother's absence she had earned her share of suffering.

There was a whispered consultation between the phy-

sician and the gentlemen, and Lena was persuaded to retire. This she would only agree to do by the side of her boy. No argument could induce her to ascend the steps again. Mention of the mulatto brought on an agitation that alarmed them all again. In the tumult this woman had been forgotten. She was found in the old ball room, sitting in sullen and silent dignity. She refused to answer any question, and when released proceeded at once to pack up her things. Search among them prior to her departure revealed an old will, written by Gaston Marbeau years before, which, worthless in the south, in England might have been of great value. So she believed, and she had acted in accordance, for when these events came to the knowledge of old Gaston, he took occasion to look for his revised will. It was never found.

CHAPTER LI.

GARNER'S CONFESSION.

When the storm passed a sad scene was unfolded to the moon that shone down through the spaces of the old cedar. A man's white face was turned upward, and for hours his lips moved in dumb agony as his eyes searched for rescue. This came only at dawn. The men had discussed the events of the night over and over, Chilon silent upon some things. Who was the stranger and what was his purpose? And what connection could he have had with the silent, sullen woman upstairs? But at dawn they knew. When they walked around under the cedar to examine for traces of his flight, they found him; and criminal, murderer as he was, they gave him aid. As gently as possible the negroes who were called lifted him from the wet ground, chilled and agonized, and bore him in doors. There was considerable commotion and the mulatto woman came to the head of the stairs to look upon the scene. Then she glided down, doubting, shuddering, lingering on the way, clinging to rail and newel until her eyes found his face. She threw herself down by the side of the litter and filled the house with her lamentations. There was no need then to ask the connection; there is no grief that compares with the grief of a woman for her offspring. And to Chilon, who assisted, a great deal more was explained when from the dying man's pockets they took the counterfeit plates.

For only then did he recognize Carl Garner.

The hand of science did all that was possible for the wretched man, but the physician warned him that if there was aught that should be arranged, it would be well to attend to it immediately; that his chances were slender. This information depressed him frightfully; but he rallied after some hours.

Colonel Marbeau, for some reason, had precipitately departed from the scene, but Chilon had been looking upon the stranger from time to time. Revenge was now impossible; he was not thinking of revenge. The dumb despair and suffering disarmed him completely. The years of bitterness and anguish fell away from him as bad dreams shed at dawn. No man had been more wronged; a week ago and he could not have stood calmly, pityingly looking upon such an enemy. He would have been tempted to trample him as a scotched and dying snake beneath his heel; he would have thrilled with joy to see life fade out from dimming eye and relaxing limb. But gentle hands had been leading him back to peace, although he did not know it.

The wounded man seemed to be trying to communicate with him; a message waited in his straining eyes. Chilon knelt silently and placed his ear by his lips. A single word escaped them:

"Priest!" That was all. To have drawn back then and awaited in silence the end, to have seen the soul go out unshrived, would have been an exquisite revenge. He was not capable of it. He nodded, consenting. Again their eyes met with quick understanding.

"You mean that it would benefit me?" he said. Again for a moment the dying man closed his eyes. "Do you wish to confess all?" And to this the same eloquent assent was given.

Chilon turned away, but came back and knelt by the dying man's side.

"If you will do that—if you will speak the truth for me;—but no, let it be without conditions. As I myself hope for forgiveness, I have, in my heart, forgiven you."

A faint smile came upon the lips of the other. He closed his eyes and turned his face.

"I believe and thank—" he began, and stopped, exhausted. Then Chilon went forth and drove as for his own life, leaving the physician to keep his enemy alive. The priest returned with him, and the dying man, under

the support of powerful stimulants, made his confession, little by little, slowly, painfully. Then they left him alone with that dark-skinned, silent mother. Some hours later she came out and said calmly:

"He is dead!"

There was no tear nor outcry then; but in the look that she bestowed upon Lena and Chilon as she passed them was so much malignity and threatening, that it was thought best to remove her from the house as soon as possible. Chilon made an effort to secure a portion of the medicine that she had been using upon her patient, but the bottle was found to be empty and cleansed. There was a suggestion of prosecution, but Colonel Marbeau instantly opposed it. He sent her back to England immediately after the burial of her son.

Chilon faced his uncle in the old library some days after the tragedy by which Carl Garner, as he was still known to the family, lost his worthless life. The boy had recovered rapidly, and safe and happy with Lena and her mother had gone for the day to Rose Cottage; but that day, holy though it is in its love and self-renunciations, in its tears and tender pledges, has no place in these chronicles. The tangled skein unwinds at Ravenswood.

Wounded deeply in his tenderest spot, shocked and confused by the rapidly shifting scenes, and torn by conflicting emotions, Colonel Marbeau was long in recovering his dignity and calmness. When he succeeded in this, he was at once the head of the family, bent upon preserving its good name, and a merciless judge of him who had so grossly threatened and abused his hospitality. Chilon knew that such a meeting was inevitable and prepared himself.

Rapidly the old man summed up the charges against him, growing more and more excited as the list lengthened, and the awful consequences unfolded. He expected a defense; there was none. The younger man rose at length, when, worn out, his accuser sank in his great chair exhausted by the passion that had exhausted itself.

"You have spoken the truth, uncle. I have no defense; but I declare to you that no stain through me rests upon your name. I have sinned, but I have paid the penalty."

He held in his hand a document which he began to unfold. "It is the confession of Carl Garner," he said in explanation, "as prepared by the priest from his notes. He writes me that the language is his own, but every fact is authorized; that the dying man's sentences were disjointed and disconnected, and could not be produced verbatim. I wish to read it to you, uncle. Will you hear it? I think that after you have heard it you will not judge me harshly." The colonel looked quickly upon the paper and seemed about to protest. After a moment's thought he said:

"Proceed, I will listen." The younger man began to read, his voice filling the room with its suppressed passion as the story grew:

"My name, as generally known, is Carl Garner and I was born in France, the son of the woman Merta, who is here to-night. Let my father speak for himself when he chooses. I was born in disgrace. I have lived in disgrace, and so I die. Let no man blame me too much. I became acquainted early in life with my circumstances; I despaired. That life has been one of error. It has cost my mother her soul, if she has one. It has cost my father his happiness and honor, besides the greater portion of his fortune. I made them pay for all that I had lost.

"A change in my father's circumstances drove me from England, where we were then living. My mother had long been no more than his housekeeper.

"He married at last and she was pensioned. I began life in America by crime. A skilled penman and fairly good engraver, I tried my hand at counterfeiting and succeeded. I soon had companions by the dozen. They called me a genius; but the labor was enormous, and I was getting but little profit. About this time, attracted

by his name—Marbeau—familiar to me,—I met Chilon and would have been devoted to him but that accident had put him in possession of a counterfeit of marvelous perfection that rendered me almost insane with envy.

"It seemed to me that I had the best claim to it. He was in disgrace, in need of money and greatly distressed. I suggested that we print specimen bills and show them to the government, offering to produce the plates for a snug sum. He yielded after a while, when I assured him that no law was to be broken, and I accompanied him to Ravenswood. We entered through his former room and seizing an opportunity used the plates upon a hand press. I had brought paper. We then returned, I supposing that he had the plates in his bag. He had, however, secreted them, having become suspicious of my sincerity; and with reason, for I had not intended to inform the government. We quarreled. There was already a reward out for Carl Garner, and I stood in with another party and sacrificed the boy. He was arrested as Garner and the counterfeits found in his satchel. I did it without fear. I knew him well enough to be assured that he would die before he would peach. I did it, too, for revenge upon the maker of those plates. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to twenty years in the penitentiary, when the truth and delivery of the plates would have saved him."

When this statement was complete the colonel, having roused himself violently, was sitting upright in his chair with a scared, white face, turned to the reader.

"But you did not—go—my boy—you—"

"I went for twelve years. I have eight yet to serve, for I am an escaped convict." The expression of his uncle's face was indescribable. His trembling fingers undid his cravat slowly and reached out for the glass of water upon his table. Chilon did not seem to see him. He was gazing upon the writing.

"Escaped convict! You, Chilon Marbeau! You are playing upon my feelings, sir—it is—impossible—it can-

not——" There was a minute's silence before he found his voice again. The appearance of the other man refuted him. Written there was the sentence executed. The sight of him standing there, the mute, changed being who had gone so recklessly in the hot passion of youth from that room, struck through the iron of his pride. For a moment pity, a wondering pity, ruled. "Why did you not tell them who you are? We have friends in New York! Why did you not wire me?"

"Because," said Chilon, quietly, "the money was printed in your house; the plates were still here. I could not get them without a disclosure. They wanted the plates. I offered them my promise, but they would not take it. I could do no more."

A low cry escaped from the old man's lips.

"And then——"

"And then, as Carl Garner, I went to prison for twelve years—until I escaped." The colonel had arisen, and now he came forward and, laying his hand upon his nephew's shoulder, looked into his face. A new light, the reflection of a great joy was there.

"Do you mean that your real name has never been used in this matter?"

"Never! When I had Garner's name fastened upon me, he took mine. His mouth was closed." The Colonel turned away and paced the room in agitation. Coming again he held out his hand, looking tenderly into the other's eyes.

"Chilon!"

"Uncle!"

"I have wronged you in thought for seventeen years, but I tell you now that there has been but one nobler Marbeau, the one who lost his name at Gettysburg in defense of his country!" Chilon pressed the hand in his.

"I owe you much, uncle, but I have not brought dishonor upon your name. The plan I had in connection with the plates was the act of a thoughtless boy, unacquainted with the vigorous laws touching a counterfeit.

My wrong doing ended there. I have paid for it with my youth, with my wife." The emotion he had struggled to restrain showed in his voice.

"She is yours still, my boy. Her heart has always been yours."

"You forget! I am an escaped convict. Fortunately the boy and girl do not know me as yet; I have attended to that! They will not know until I come back with my right name. I have the plates and the promise of an honorable man. I will come back free. And this time my right name will be a safe asylum for the wretched Garner!"

"You should have come to me, boy; you owed it to me to come!"

"No, uncle; I think not. I have learned that Lena had such a plan in mind,—she and Celeste. I could not have consented. I could not let you see the unhappy Chilon——"

"I think you would not," said his uncle, simply.

"And after Richard's death—feeling that I had caused it—that Lena looked upon me as an assassin—again I could not!" After a while he remembered and took up the papers. "You will recall that you heard me say I had seen the man who killed Richard,—listen:

"Upon the night that Richard Marbeau met his death at my hands, I came to the cabin of the negress Silvy, bent upon one more effort to secure the plates. I was desperate then; but with them I held the future in my control. I had just ended my term for implication in a train robbery and needed money. The woman had aged rapidly since my first visit, and I am not certain that she remembered me. I found Chilon there sick. He was delirious with fever and I guessed that he was an 'escape.' I wore a watch charm, a flat piece of amber, about the size and shape of a silver dollar, that was covered with hieroglyphics and queer drawings, very neatly engraved. It had been my mother's and was said to be of African origin. A member of the Archæological society once

told me that it seemed to indicate the name of certain plants that had marked effects upon the mind and that it was probably the fetish of some tribal voodoo or herb doctor. At sight of this the old woman was transformed. She snatched it away and was aroused to a pitch of ecstacy or fury, I could not tell which. I believe though she would have embraced me if I had permitted. This old woman seemed to have a blood feud to settle with Richard Marbeau, and producing an awful looking knife urged me to kill him, and to humor her I took it when I came in the storm to this house four years ago. By a strange fatality it did its work. I entered the house and reached the old ball-room safely, which I searched in vain. It was there we had used the little press, and there I had thought to find the plates. I became alarmed presently at the number of people who had come to the house, for it was lit up, and there was singing and instrumental music below, with footfalls frequently upon the stair. I had almost despaired, but the room through which we had entered was Chilon's, and there was a chance that in passing out he had concealed the plates there. If I failed, then I would wait and force the needed information from the sick man. It was even possible that he had the plates, something that had not until then occurred to me.

"The house was dark at length and quiet, and I was feeling my way through the upper hall when I ran against a man who waited by a bedroom door. We grappled; I threw him off and rushed for the corner room, and entered there. I collided with Chilon who, in his delirium, I believe, had followed me. The shock checked me for a moment. Richard fired, and I killed him with one blow of the knife and escaped, passing Chilon in the dark. It occurred to me then that the crime would be fastened upon him and that again he would be the victim of circumstances; but I would take no chances. I passed the cabin and left as I had come, by the river. That was my only murder; it was forced upon me; it was not premedi-

tated. But, murder as it was, it did not compare with the wrong I had done to Chilon Marbeau. My last visit to this fatal spot was due to a plot of my mother's. She knew my wish, and had no love for the Marbeaus. She was willing to help me, and only longed for an opportunity to visit the home again. Forty odd years had passed since she was in it. She had been taught in her youth that Gaston Marbeau's will made her his sole legatee by trust, but that will had disappeared. She believed it had been carried to America with his effects when he went there to live. Chance gave her an opportunity to destroy his second, and the possession of the first would, upon his death, have made her independent, for he is moderately rich.

"It was while planning to accomplish this end that Colonel Marbeau brought Lena to our village for change and a visit to his brother. Time had modified many sorrows, and my mother, then quietly ministering to the wants of the common people with her herbs and simple remedies, went to see the new-comers. She received kind treatment, and gradually they began to rely upon her to nurse the sick woman. She saw in her the means of return to America and the accomplishment of her purpose, and with the use of a decoction whose secret was one of her inheritances from an African ancestry, she filled the poor woman's mind with vagaries and hallucinations; she made herself a necessity; she pleaded a desire to see her native land again; there was no harm, the past was sealed;— and so they took her. I will not judge my own mother in this, my last hour, but I owe her nothing, and to others I owe something. She has the old will of Gaston Marbeau, and her purpose is accomplished; but if it had not been found Lena Marbeau would have died, in my opinion; for by the new will she was the heir."

"Stop!" said the colonel, rising slowly, and painfully. "I cannot take in all the damnable villainy,—let me see that paper."

He came and took the sheet and reread the last page. Presently he handed it back. He did not return to his chair. He motioned to Chilon to bring it; and his bent form leaned forward to meet it as it came.

"Will you let me bring you a glass of water, uncle?"

"No. Proceed. Providence only discloses the full wickedness of the world to the old. It helps them to resign it without regret. Proceed, sir."

"My destruction is due to my mother, but I hold her guiltless. By accident she discovered the secret places of the old desk and all that she searched for. I was waiting in the city to hear from her, and came occasionally for consultation. A message that she had succeeded brought me when the house was full of people, but I was reckless. The rest is known. In my hurried flight the sight of Chilon standing where in memory I had seen him ten thousand times filled me with momentary terror. I looked back while on the roof,—and this is the end! The hours in which I lay under that tree, unable to move or cry out, suffering agony indescribable, has made this confession possible; has brought me to direct that it shall be furnished over your sacred certificate to Chilon Marbeau, to whom I will it, as my only possible reparation."

The Colonel was looking intently upon the reader.

"You omitted a page," he said, quietly.

"It contains," said Chilon, "information of Lena Marbeau so astounding, so unexpected, that I prefer not to read it. If it is not true, you would not wish to have it read. If it is, there is no need."

"It states that she is not my daughter, in fact," said the Colonel, sadly and gently,—"it is true. If it tells you that she is the daughter of Gaston Marbeau,—it is true."

"That is what it reveals," said Chilon. He looked sadly and tenderly upon the old man. He seemed to be striking from him the prop and mainstay of his old age.

"There is no long story, my boy, and no good one to be told. The only child ever born to old Silvy was this wo-

man Merta. Both in their youth were beautiful, and youth is blind. Well, we sent Gaston to study abroad; and—" with a slight gesture—"it did no good. He was lost to us for many years. But later, under the stimulus of a lofty nature set free, he put aside his errors and married a dear woman we loved. Lena is the child for whom she gave her life. Then Gaston suffered from loneliness and despair. Merta found him disarmed by the reaction, an easy victim again. My wife and I easily persuaded him to give us the child for her own good, and it followed as we planned. He came to us—oh, my boy, those were happy days when Gaston was here and you children stormed the house."

"Does Lena know?" said the young man.

"No. I pledged my honor to Gaston. To reveal the fact would be to reveal the cause. He was proudest in his degradation!"

"She will not know from me. And now, sir, my task is ended. I have found for you Chilon Marbeau. I go away to clear his name, and if I come again, I come free and with honor."

"Chilon! Chilon! Boy, I go with you——"

"No, uncle. Leave it to me. Your face must not appear, your name be handled. I go to see what the promise of a man who has honesty written in his every feature, is worth. This confession you will keep. I will procure a statement such as may be needed that will not contain the family name. Farewell! If we meet no more, remember always that Chilon Marbeau loved his home too well to return!"

"But Lena—and the boy!" Chilon stood with downcast face.

"It is better this way," he said simply. "I have talked with her. She understands." They clasped hands and looked into each other's faces. Then silently Chilon released the hand in his and turned away.

CONCLUSION.

Colonel Marbeau sat all alone in his cool library. Upon his table lay spread the old sheepskin which held the names and record of his family. He had adjusted his glasses, and, pen in hand, was ready to complete it. His own generation closed the old record, and other Marbeaus now awaited recognition. He was no draftsman and a problem had arisen. As thus he waited, there was a quick, manly step upon the veranda and in the hall. With head erect, Chilon Marbeau, the elder, entered the room. His uncle read in his face the glad tidings that had made the soul within him happy. The two men stood again as they had parted a week before, with clasped hands, gazing into each other's face.

"It is true," said the younger man; "I am free!"

"Chilon!"

"I found great souls—great, honest hearts. They broke down all technicalities." The promise was faithfully kept. A pardon was issued to Carl Garner, 'for good and sufficient reasons,' and the plates went into the possession of the treasury, to become a seven days' wonder and then—mere metal. No human being knew Carl Garner, pardoned, merged into Chilon Marbeau, except one man, and he, more than all the world, was most interested in the family honor. Robert Underhill's disappearance was a mystery that has never been solved in New York. After a while his mail went back unclaimed, and the men who waited in the dark corners of great cities cursed him; but it was of little moment then."

Two men gave themselves up to the joy of the hour. For both, life had taken on new colors. The wanderer was home again. Under its skies and in the loving company of his people vengeance fled and remorse was hallowed into repentance. Scarcely less bright the old

man's skies. Lena and Chilon were at home, and Ravenswood had a male heir. What else could he wish? Nothing, except their company and that of the lovers estranged so long. They planned it out that day. Uncle Gaston must come, and Celeste with Robert Aubren. This was Chilon's ultimatum. The colonel surrendered.

"Put away your writing, uncle. Let us be going; no time like the present, and time enough for that!"

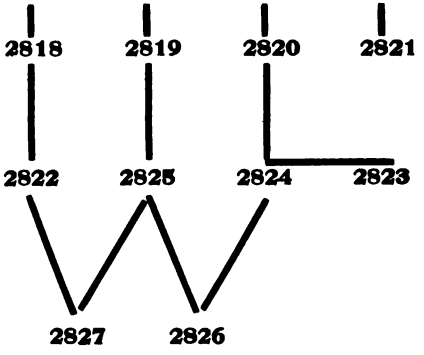
"No, sir. I take your suggestion as applying to this. I am not willing to falsify the record, my boy, and Lena's must be straight. She will have to know some day, and you can keep the document secret till then. The trouble is the cousinship between you has made a cross record necessary, and I am not draftsman enough to fix it. This has occurred, you will note, many times, but never under the same circumstances."

The young man looked upon the record sadly, and then in silence drew the lines of descent, and handed it back to his uncle.

"You can add dates, uncle, and it will be complete."

The old man stood gazing intently upon the result. Then he uttered a low cry.

"What is it?" asked Chilon in surprise, rising to stand by his side. The record complete was thus:



2818—Richard (4th).
2819—Gaston.
2820—Francis.
2821—Charles.
2822—Richard (5th).
2823—Celeste.
2824—Chilon (3rd).
2825—Lena (4th).
2826—Chilon (4th).
2827—Lena (5th).

"The 'W' has come at last," said Colonel Marbeau, smiling. And he repeated the jingle musingly:

"When 'W' enters the Marbeau tree,
Happy will the next bride be."

"I think the old prophecy will be fulfilled," said Chilon. "The next bride—we shall make her happy; shall we not, uncle?"

"You will not need my help, boy!"

L'ENVOI.

The sun shone bright over Ravenswood. The Whitehall boat upon the lake held a happy party. Chilon and Lena, side by side, on the broad rear seat, in low tones planned the future for the lives blooming so sweetly beneath their eyes. The little girl in front held a bunch of fair lilies drawn by little Chilon for her from the placid waters on which they were drifting. Upon one blossom a great butterfly had settled, his broad wings rising and falling gently as he searched for honey. Glass in hand, the boy was studying the marvels of the little visitor and counting the slow vibrations of his wings.

"Twenty to the minute, Lena," he said, "just the number of my respirations." And presently looking into the

loving eyes of his new found sister, he said, with odd gallantry: "Perhaps that respiration is the vibration of my soul's wings as she waits through life above her lily." She smiled up to him.

"Her lily, Chilon?" He turned quickly and touched his lips to hers.

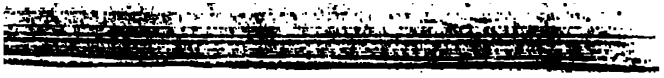
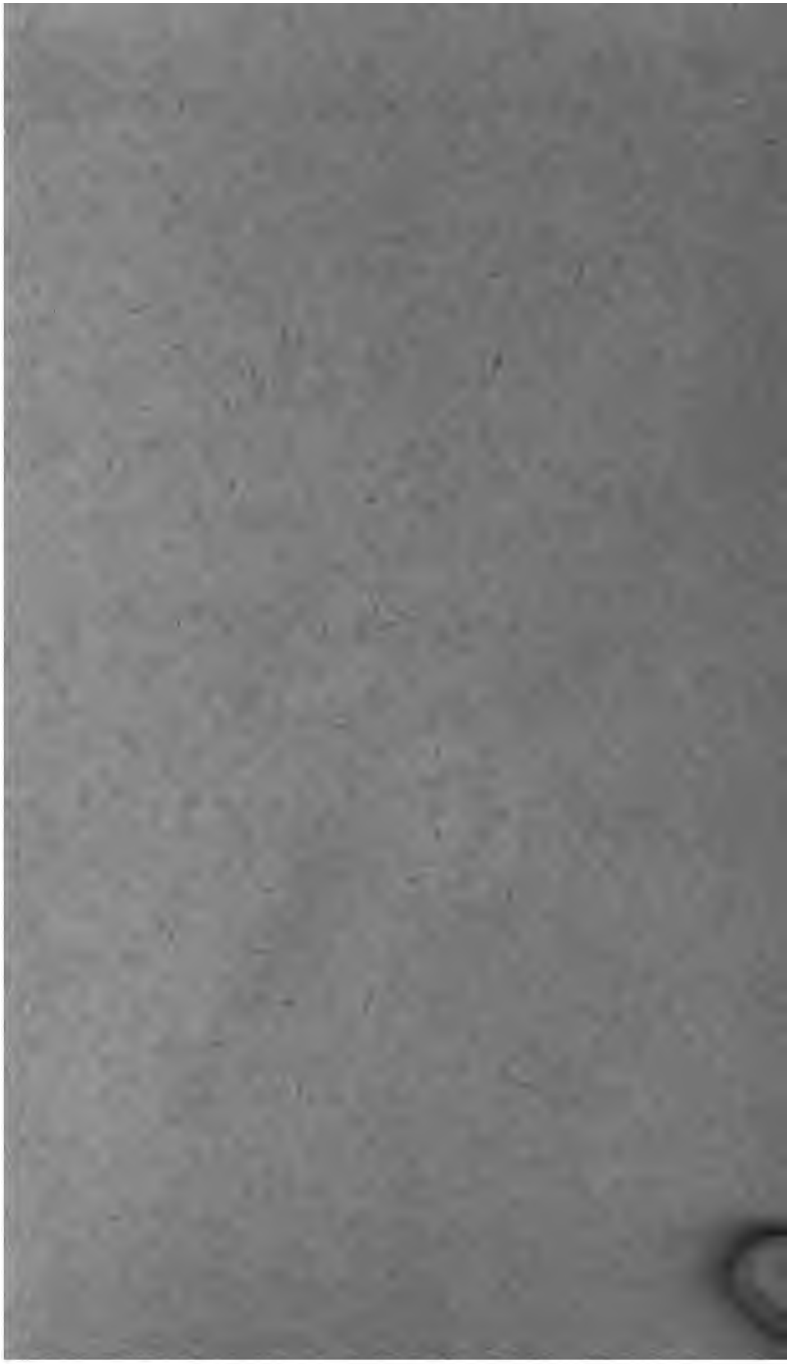
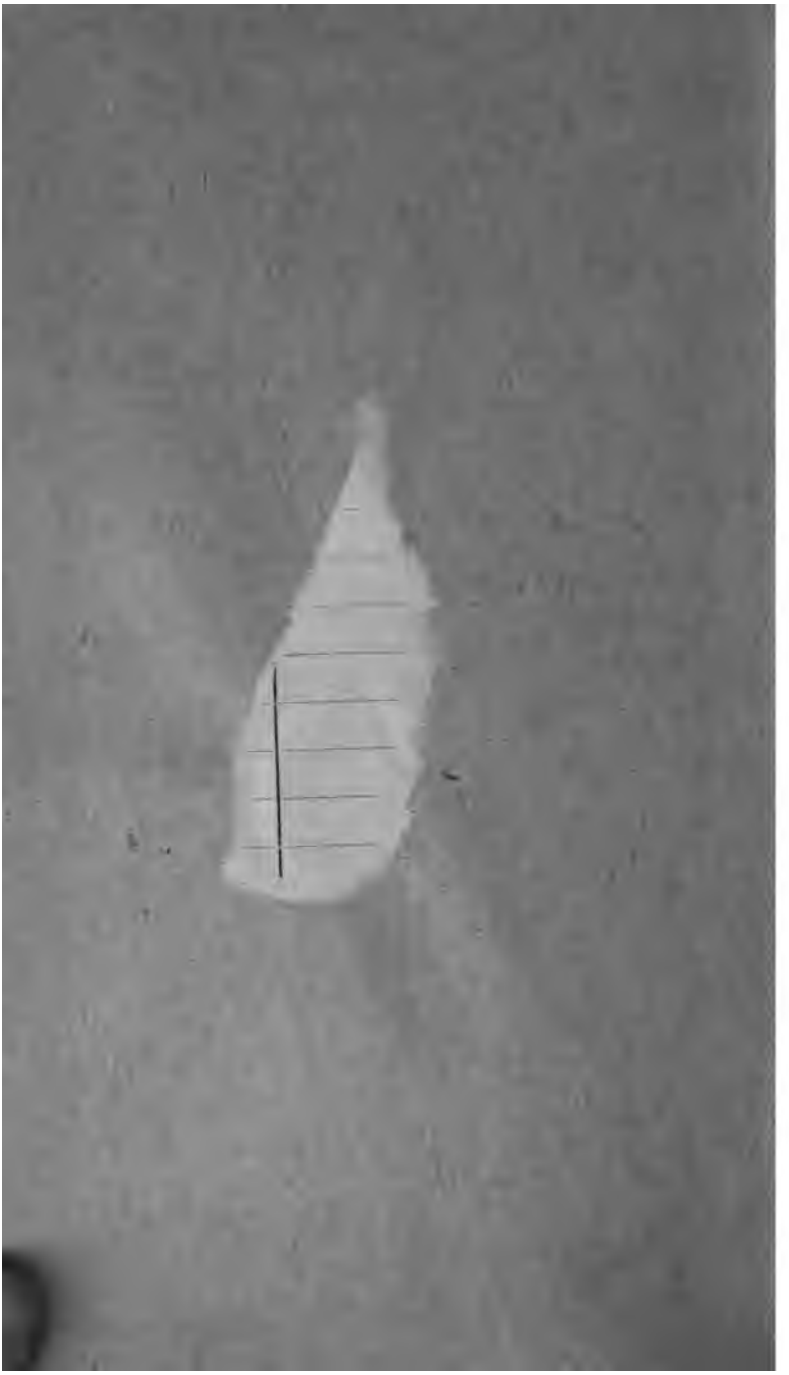
"The Lily of Ravenswood, sister. It will never have another."

Behind them, the man and woman exchanged glances.

"The Lily of Ravenswood!" exclaimed he. "How strange. It is like a voice from our youth!"

"Yes," said the woman, tenderly, "each lily has its little day. Look, the waters are white with them. They were white with them in our times, too, Chilon!"

"The Lily of Ravenswood!" he repeated absently. The shadows were deep and melting within his eyes as they rested upon her. The children would have said that he listened to the strains of some old song.

THE END.

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